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Security Council

Fifty-sixth year

Provisional

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Monday, 19 March 2001, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Yel'chenko	(Ukraine)
Members:	Bangladesh	Mr. Ahsan
	China	Mr. Wang Yingfan
	Colombia	Mr. Valdivieso
	France	Mr. Levitte
	Ireland	Mr. Ryan
	Jamaica	Miss Durrant
	Mali	Mr. Issouf Oumar Maiga
	Mauritius	Mr. Neewoor
	Norway	Mr. Kolby
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Singapore	Mr. Mahbubani
	Tunisia	Mr. Ben Mustapha
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Jeremy Greenstock
	United States of America	Mr. Cunningham

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

Letter dated 13 March 2001 from the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2001/216).

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

01-29340 (E)

The meeting was resumed at 3.15 p.m. on Monday, 19 March 2001.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Indonesia and Lebanon, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Widodo (Indonesia) and Mr. Tadmoury (Lebanon) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 16 March 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Malaysia to the United Nations, which reads as follows:

> "I have the honour, in my capacity as Chairman of the Islamic Group at the United Nations, to request that the Security Council extend an invitation to His Excellency Mr. Mokhtar Lamani, Permanent Observer of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to the United Nations, to participate in the Council's discussion on the agenda item 'The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question', without the right to vote, under rule 39 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Council. "

That letter has been issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/2001/235.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 to Mr. Lamani.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 15 March 2001 from the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations, which reads as follows:

> "In my capacity as Chairman of the Arab Group for the month of March 2001, I have the honour to request that the Security Council address an invitation, in accordance with rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure, to Mr. Ali Ahmed Abbas, Deputy Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations, to participate in Council deliberations on the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory."

That letter has been issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/2001/236.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 to Mr. Abbas.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Pakistan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Ahmad (Pakistan): My first word must be one of gratitude to you, Mr. President, for suspending the debate on Friday and carrying it over the weekend. Whether you say it or not, I take it that, since I was travelling overseas, you awaited my return so that I could come and make this statement personally today. I am indeed privileged to be the first speaker this afternoon in this important meeting.

Once again we return to this Chamber, as we have done so many times before, to discuss the issue of Palestine, an issue which, like others, remains on the agenda of this Council, unresolved.

As the Council will recall, on 4 October last year, in this very room, we spoke of the image of that small child, Mohammed Al-Durra, lying at his father's side as the last breath of life slipped out of him. This was, as I said then, "only one glimpse of the fate that is suffered by thousands of children in different parts of the world that are under foreign occupation or in conflict situations" (*S/PV.4204 (Resumption 1), p. 4*). The tragedy is that, in these last five months, scores more of innocent people have died. I ask the Council again: are the killings of children not sufficient reminders that a part of humanity dies each time an innocent life is snuffed by violence?

We have debated in this very Chamber the issue of Palestine for well over half a century. The international community has unequivocally pronounced

its support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. Security Council resolutions have also called for Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories. Yet the Palestinians have not been given the land that is theirs by right. Peace in the Middle East still remains as elusive as ever. As the Council's resolutions remain unimplemented, the Palestinian people and others in similar circumstances continue to be deprived of their right of self-determination. While we have waited for this body to act and to implement its own resolutions, flickers of hope have turned into ashes of despair. Unfortunately, power politics and political expediency have continued to disable this body in addressing its Charter obligations.

The present deteriorating situation no doubt warrants our urgent attention. The international community must act with determination to prevent the situation from worsening. There are two issues at stake here. The first is of a more immediate nature: the protection of the Palestinian people, who are being subjected to the repressive and disproportionate use of force as well as virtual economic strangulation. We urge the Security Council to take the necessary measures to protect the Palestinian people by deploying a United Nations observer force in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem. Such a measure is the least that can be done to prevent the aggravation of the situation on the ground.

In addition, further actions need to be taken to end the violence in Palestine. As in the case of other peoples under foreign occupation, Pakistan has been a steadfast supporter of the just struggle of the Palestinian people for their inalienable rights. The international community, particularly the guarantors of the peace process, must use their influence and good offices to ensure full Israeli compliance with the peace agreements and with its legal obligations and responsibilities as an occupying Power, under the Fourth Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949.

The second issue is the broader, fundamental issue of the realization by the Palestinians of their inalienable rights. This involves a concerted approach aimed at the restoration of the peace process. It is essential to facilitate the fulfilment of all agreements reached and to implement Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) in order to avert the region's return to conflict. We urge the parties concerned to take the necessary measures to end hostilities and restore calm. In this regard we also call on the Security Council to take urgent steps to safeguard peace and security in the region.

Last year we saw bold steps taken in the direction of peace. But soon thereafter we also saw how the provocative actions of some individuals severely undermined the progress towards peace. This progress now stands blocked by intransigence. The international community must not allow the continuation of such a state of affairs, which could only wreck the future of the Middle East. Instead, the Israeli leadership must be compelled to return to the negotiating table in good faith. The process of peace, which has been so cruelly derailed, needs to be urgently put back on track.

We believe that no lasting peace in the Middle East would be possible without achieving a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. The realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territory, including the dismantling of illegal settlements, are essential for any meaningful progress in the peace process.

An overarching peace settlement for the Middle East question, by definition, must also include the vacation of the Syrian Govan Heights by Israel and full respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Lebanon. Long-term stability and security for all in the region can be guaranteed only on the basis of the principle of land for peace.

Prompt action is therefore required, particularly by the Security Council, to protect the Palestinians, to ensure the safety and sanctity of Al-CDs Al-Sheriff and to facilitate the realization of the national rights of the Palestinian people. The prospects of peace in that region once again rest with this body. How many more innocent people will have to die, and not just in Palestine but also in other "forgotten" conflict areas, like Kashmir, before this Council finds the resolve and capability to fulfil its own responsibilities and Charter obligations? How long shall we continue to wait for the oppressed peoples in all parts of the world to regain their fundamental rights and for the conscience of humanity to awaken to the imperatives of justice and fair play?

The President: I thank the representative of Pakistan for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of New Zealand. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. MacKay (New Zealand): New Zealanders are dismayed at the continuation of violence in Israel and the occupied territories. It is clear from over half a century of conflict that neither violence nor repression holds any hope for creating peace and security.

New Zealand firmly condemns all terrorist actions. The targeting of civilians promotes fear and hatred. It is for that reason that we urge both sides to refrain from such actions and that we urge Israel to lift its siege on the towns of the occupied territories. Just as terrorist bombs hurt indiscriminately, so too do the restrictions on the movements of ordinary Palestinians. The blockade of the Palestinian population is disproportionate to the threat Israel faces, and it cannot provide the security that Israel seeks. Instead, it will simply provide more fertile ground in which extremist groups can seek to expand their destructive causes.

We also urge Israel to release the tax payments due to the Palestinian Authority. The withholding of those funds, combined with the economic effects of the closure of Gaza and the West Bank, has caused a dire situation in the occupied territories. The loss of work and hope only increases the desperation of the Palestinian population. All conflict has an economic and social dimension, and the destruction of the Palestinian economy serves no one, but greatly increases human suffering.

New Zealand calls on the leaders of both parties to find a way past the distrust and to work together to provide a viable future for both their peoples.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): The delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic congratulates you, Sir, and your friendly country, Ukraine, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of March. We wish you every success as you shoulder the important responsibilities of the presidency. We moreover thank you, Sir, and the other members of the Security Council for your speedy response to the request by the Arab Group and by the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) to convene an urgent Council meeting to discuss escalated repressive Israeli practices and measures against Palestinian civilians in the occupied territories.

My delegation wishes also to commend your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Saïd Ben Mustapha, Permanent Representative of brotherly Tunisia, for his wise guidance of the Council's work last month.

My delegation endorses the statement made here last Thursday by the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates on behalf of the Arab Group. Our return to the Security Council today to speak of the tragic situation faced by the Palestinian people reflects our firm belief that it is important for the Council to shoulder its responsibilities under the Charter and in the light of the resolutions it has adopted over many years with a view to resolving the explosive situation in the Middle East, which poses a threat to international peace and security. It is also a result of Israel's stubborn determination to use brutal military force, and of its disdain for the Palestinians. These are unique in the modern world in terms of violations of international law and international humanitarian law, and especially of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949.

What is taking place in the towns and villages of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in full view of the world is a terrible massacre, in the fullest meaning of that word. It is, in fact, methodical genocide. As they lie asleep in their homes, as they walk in the street, as they express their inherent right to reject Israeli occupation and its continued repression, Palestinians — women, children and old people — are being killed by the aircraft, tanks and missiles of the Israeli forces. A document published by the United States organization International Action Center indicates that Israel has actually used depleted-uranium munitions against Palestinian civilians and Palestinian institutions. That United States organization stresses that it has proof that the Israeli forces have used munitions of that kind.

Over these four months, more than 400 children, women and other innocent civilians have been martyred as a result of Israel's policy to kill, and more than 15,000 have been injured; these people suffer from permanent disabilities that may affect them for the rest of their lives. What, then, is this international

organization waiting for before it adopts a serious resolution that will put an end to all such Israeli practices? Are we waiting for hundreds or thousands more Palestinians to be killed, or for thousands more to be injured and permanently disabled? Are we waiting for more Palestinian homes to be destroyed and their owners displaced? Are we waiting for the uprooting of thousands more fruit trees and the destruction of their environment, and for the land to be turned into a wasteland?

In practice, permitting Israel to continue its policies means Palestinian genocide. The *Sunday Times* newspaper published an article by its correspondent in Palestine; this was reprinted in the magazine *Al-Insaan*, published by the International Committee of the Red Cross. It describes the situation faced by the Palestinians in Hebron in this way:

> "When night falls on Hebron, it marks the beginning of another night of fear and trepidation for the Palestinian people in that divided city. The night passes in the hope that we will see a new dawn that will be more merciful to those people and to their children, who spend their nights weeping in terror."

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm the position of our Committee that the United Nations, through its various efforts and activities, should continue to assume its permanent responsibility towards all aspects of the question of Palestine until it is resolved in a satisfactory manner, in conformity with the relevant United Nations resolutions and in accordance with international legitimacy, until the Palestinian people fully enjoy their inalienable and immutable rights — so that the dramatic events taking place on the ground that have once again brought us together in this Chamber finally become a distant memory.

The President: I thank the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Fadaifard (Islamic Republic of Iran): I wish to extend my congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of March. We have full confidence that, under your wise guidance, the Council will make progress in dealing with the issues on its agenda. Let me also extend my felicitations to your predecessor, Ambassador Saïd Ben Mustapha of Tunisia, for his skilful stewardship of the Council's activities last month. I should also like to thank you for convening this important meeting of the Security Council at this critical time for the Palestinian people.

Since last September, the occupying forces in the Palestinian territories have been engaged in an excessive and disproportionate act of violence and collective punishment against the rightful protests of the Palestinians against the protracted occupation of their homeland. Over the course of recent months, the whole of the Palestinian territories have been the scene of the killing of hundreds and injuring of thousands of defenceless civilians.

Moreover, there has been an increase in tension and the level of violence in the Palestinian territories since a more aggressive Israeli faction took up the reins of power. Among other things, this has led to an intensification of the policy of suffocating and besieging cities and villages in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The tightening of blockades against the Palestinian territories by the occupiers is further preventing Palestinians from having access to basic necessities and medical treatment, travelling to work and trading their goods throughout the area. Without a doubt, this amounts to collective punishment and a stranglehold on a whole people in the name of security for the occupiers. The pursuit of this policy over several months has devastated the Palestinian economy, created financial a crisis in the Palestinian institutions and plunged more families into poverty.

Indiscriminate killings and the besieging of the Palestinians negate the Israeli pretence of peaceful intentions or a desire for pacific co-existence with the Muslims and Christians in the region. The crimes being committed by the Israeli armed forces are consistent with the aggressive and expansionist policies of the occupying Power. Israel's repeated crimes and heavy-handed approach run counter to all its high-sounding and empty claims of seeking peace. This regime is the main cause behind the tension and instability in the region. While deceitfully negotiating peace with the Palestinians, it embarked on violently assaulting the

oppressed and defenceless people of the occupied territories.

The fundamental question the international community — represented by the United Nations and the Security Council — now faces is to what extent we can normally justify the loss of Palestinian blood and life, the homelessness and agony before the occupiers and aggressors are tamed and the fundamental rights of the Palestinians to self-determination in their own land is realized. The international community in general and the Islamic world in particular continue to be deeply concerned about the ongoing atrocities being committed by Israeli troops. The disdain of Israeli leaders for the principles of international law and the decisions of the United Nations is no secret to anyone in this Chamber. That disdain is commonly acknowledged, deplored and condemned. But very little, if anything, is done about it.

In this context, we deplore some recent remarks that amount to encouraging the occupying regime in the pursuit of its bloody campaign against Palestinian civilians. The recent reiteration of commitment by a Member State of the United Nations to transfer its embassy to occupied Al-Quds — which, among other things, constitutes a violation of Security Council resolutions — represents one-sided support for the Israeli regime, is likely to further escalate tension in the region and represents a clear bias towards occupation and aggression.

In our view, the international community and the United Nations — especially this Council — have a responsibility to intervene to stop the brutal campaign by the Israeli armed forces against civilians. Undoubtedly, the unchecked acts by Israel will further exacerbate the situation in the Middle East as a whole. The defeat in the Council last December of a draft resolution to authorize the establishment of a United Nations observer force to protect Palestinian civilians led to more violence and more bloodshed. Since then more than 70 Palestinians have lost their lives, more destruction has occurred, and the plight of Palestinian civilians has been further exacerbated.

In the face of this worsening situation, the Palestinian authorities and a vast majority of the Member States of the United Nations — including the Islamic, Arab and Non-Aligned States — have called for an international force to be stationed in the occupied territories with a view to protecting civilians and putting an end to the bloody campaign by the Israeli forces. We expect the Security Council to fulfil its responsibility this time and take concrete and appropriate measures to this end.

The President: I thank the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Cuba. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Year by year, day by day, the Middle East peace process has since the Madrid conference been losing momentum and motivation. It is very clear to all who are interested in peace, within our region or outside it, that Israel's continued occupation of the Arab territories — under the pretext of a pathological need for security and on the basis of false allegations — is the main impediment to the achievement of peace.

The peace process is at a standstill on all its tracks, because Israel continues to occupy Arab territories, to reject international legitimacy, to flout resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and to refuse to implement the principle of land for peace.

We are in strong agreement with what was said in the Council last Thursday: that the fall of the previous Israeli Government was the result of what the peace process has actually achieved. This is very true, because the previous Israeli Government's policy was simply to talk about peace, not to take any concrete steps to achieve it. It claimed to be preparing to implement those internationally binding resolutions calling upon it to withdraw from the occupied Arab territories, but in fact its proposed solutions were a far cry from those resolutions, as it wants to continue its occupation and hegemony; maintain control of occupied Arab territories and Arab holy sites; and continue with its repression of Arab citizens, stripping them of their freedom, sovereignty and dignity.

The peace to which all Arabs aspire — as do all other peace-loving peoples of the world — is one that would restore to the Arabs their occupied territories through Israel's full withdrawal to the line of 4 June 1967.

The Syrian Arab Republic would like here to reiterate its unreserved support for the struggle of the heroic Palestinian people and for the realization of their inalienable rights, including the right to return,

the right to self-determination, and the right to establish an independent state on their national soil, with Jerusalem as its capital.

The measures taken by Israel in the West Bank and the Gaza strip, which have led to the partitioning of the West Bank into 43 cantons and the Gaza strip into four cantons, are inhuman measures whose main objective is to restrict the mobility of Palestinian citizens and to entrench the suffocating economic blockade, with a view to subjugating the Palestinian people and to starving them. This has caused the situation in the Palestinian territories to deteriorate and has increased tensions, reflecting the real intentions of the Israeli Government.

The Arab Foreign Ministers, in a communiqué dated 12 March 2001, called upon the Security Council to assume its responsibilities and to take the necessary measures to protect the Palestinian people and to prevent any further deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. The Foreign Ministers called on the Security Council to adopt the necessary resolutions to form an international protection force for the Palestinian people and to dispatch it, as urgently as possible, to the occupied Palestinian territories.

The Syrian Arab Republic, which opened the way for the Middle East peace process, would like to reiterate once again the Council's continuing obligation to bring about a comprehensive and just peace in the region, which should be its strategic option.

I should like also to reiterate that the Council should take all the necessary measures to see that its relevant resolutions are implemented, in particular resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as any measures leading to a complete Israeli withdrawal from the Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinian occupied territories, in order to bring about a comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East.

Israel's longstanding policy of repression and aggression shows no sign of ending. Our people, who were instrumental in building human civilization, are a freedom-loving people who support the principles of sovereignty and independence. They cannot accept injustice, insults or subjugation to Israeli terrorism. Peace requires justice, and Israel cannot bring about peace and security with its continued occupation of Arab territories. And peace, as I would emphasize once again, is the only road to security.

The President: I thank the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is Mr. Ibra Deguène Ka, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to whom the Council has extended an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure.

I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Ka (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, allow me at the outset to welcome you to New York and to congratulate you most warmly on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of March. I am confident that under your able leadership, the work of the Council will be carried out in a constructive manner.

I should like also to take advantage of this opportunity to congratulate your predecessor, Ambassador Saïd Ben Mustapha, Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations, on the exemplary manner in which he guided the work of the Council during the month of February.

I am grateful to you, Mr. President, as well as to the other members of the Council, for giving me the opportunity, in my capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to participate in this important debate on the current situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem.

The last time that the Council had a discussion on this theme was at the beginning of October 2000. Even a cursory glance at developments in recent months in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, reveals that a crisis of major proportions has developed. In my statement to the Council on 4 October last, I said that 63 Palestinians had been killed and more than 1,500 injured. Today, more than 360 Palestinian civilians have been killed and some 15,000 wounded. Tragically, the sad toll of Palestinian victims includes many children, women and elderly people. Despite the worldwide expressions of concern about the policies of the Government of Israel, the toll continues to rise. At the beginning of this month, the Committee that I represent outlined its position with respect to the dangerous security situation on the

ground, the worrying standstill in the peace negotiations and the terrible deterioration of the Palestinian economy.

In the course of recent months, our Committee has noted with extreme concern the continuing cycle of violence in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, and the excessive reliance on force by the Israeli Defence Forces. According to the information available, Israel is systematically responding with disproportionate force to every outbreak of protest throughout the occupied Palestinian territory. Furthermore, groups of armed settlers regularly harass and physically assault Palestinian civilians, destroying their property and committing criminal acts for which they go unpunished. The Israeli Defence Forces, the Israeli security forces and the police often close their eyes to acts of violence and provocation by settlers, thereby causing resentment and anger to breed within the Palestinian population.

Paradoxically, on the one hand, a state of affairs has been created which is fuelled by confrontation and a cycle of violence; on the other hand, unarmed populations are being asked to end the violence that is triggered by provocation and punitive expeditions on the part of the occupier.

Our Committee has also joined the international community in condemning the practice of extra-judicial killings of Palestinian officials by the Israeli security forces. These practices are contrary to the accepted norms of international law; such behaviour creates a crisis of confidence among the parties, thereby pushing back the prospect of resuming the peace negotiations.

We welcome the position of principle taken in this regard by the European Union. The Committee believes that the international community should not stand idly by as the situation escalates. Indeed, it should urgently consider ways of protecting the Palestinian people by taking the necessary measures, including establishing international mechanisms to protect the Palestinian civilians. We firmly believe that the current status quo is completely unacceptable and untenable and that decisive action is needed to put an end to the violence and bloodshed. Our Committee calls upon the new Government of Israel to respect and live up to the agreements that it has already signed and to respect the principles of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, as well as the provisions of relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

The upheavals that we have been witnessing since September have had a devastating effect on the Palestinian economy, and our Committee is particularly concerned about the dangers posed by the rapid disintegration of the Palestinian economy as a result of restrictive policies pursued by the Government of Israel. The continuing closures of the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, restrictions on the movement of people and goods, the withholding of customs and tax income and other measures of collective punishment have had a disastrous, cumulative effect on the Palestinian economy as a whole. It is now impossible to work or gain access to the labour market in Israel, the climate of violence is keeping tourists away, food crops have been destroyed and infrastructure has been deliberately damaged. The Palestinians are now under siege and are forced to struggle for survival on a daily basis, and can no longer plan for their long-term development.

The recent reports by the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator paint a bleak and disturbing picture of this situation, of the imminent fiscal crisis of the Palestinian Authority and its institutions, which are in danger of no longer being able to function. We fully share the view that the budgetary situation of the Palestinian Authority should be a top priority of the international community, as should assistance to the Palestinian people for dealing with an overwhelming humanitarian crisis. Our Committee welcomes the willingness of the donors to come to the aid of the Palestinians. For its part, the United Nations should continue to mobilize its resources so as to provide substantial assistance to provide for the most urgent needs.

I should now like to say a few words about the state of the peace process. All of us here are greatly concerned about the freeze in the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations. Encouraged by the noticeable progress achieved at Camp David, Sharm el-Sheikh and Taba, we had reason to believe that the parties were moving towards a real breakthrough — even, perhaps, an agreement. These hopes have not yet been fulfilled because some statements attributed to certain members of the new Israeli Government show that the Israeli side does not seem to be prepared to resume the negotiations from the point where they were left off.

The year 2001 will mark the tenth anniversary of the Middle East peace conference held in Madrid. The hopes and the progress made in the past decade cannot be allowed to wane. We should do everything in our power to help the parties to return to the negotiating table and complete the historic journey that they embarked on, with courage and foresight, in 1991, and finally achieve the peace of the brave and a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Within the framework of this historic voyage, we should never forget that the goal of the journey is, specifically, to bring an end, in peace and security and through negotiation, to the illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to congratulate Ukraine and you, Mr. President, and to wish you every success in your presidency. I also wish to recognize the efficient presidency of Tunisia.

We are discussing one of the most complicated and recurrent items on the Security Council agenda. Dozens of resolutions have been adopted that clearly establish the will of the majority of Member States to move towards a definitive and just solution of the item.

Just recently, to mention a few examples, Security Council resolution 1322 (2000) and General Assembly resolution ES-10/7 were adopted, which condemned the excessive use of force by the Israeli armed forces and called for the implementation of resolution 1322 (2000). The Human Rights Commission adopted a resolution in this regard on 19 October 2000. The Economic and Social Council adopted a resolution on Palestine, which is contained in the report of the Human Rights Commission. Furthermore, the Secretary-General has also continued his tireless efforts in the search for solutions to the present crisis.

Nonetheless, it is very frustrating to acknowledge the fact that despite all these efforts, Israeli aggression continues. The Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 continues to be trampled; the excessive and indiscriminate use of force does not stop; and every day new Palestinian victims increase the martyrology of that suffering people. Over 400 dead and several thousand injured, the large majority being innocent Palestinian civilians, clearly reflect the tragic human cost of these almost six months of violence, begun as a result of the provocative visit of 28 September to Al-Haram al-Sharif.

The border closures of the Palestinian territories and other acts with serious economic consequences are also flagrant violations of the human rights of the Palestinian population, which should be severely condemned. The Palestinian National Authority requires the urgent assistance of the international community to avoid economic collapse.

If Israel had complied with the many Security Council resolutions on the question of Palestine, the critical situation we are witnessing today in occupied territories would not be taking place now.

At the Security Council meeting held on 10 November, the President of the Palestinian National Authority described in detail the deterioration of the situation and clearly explained the reasons for which an observer mission of protection should be immediately deployed. My delegation wishes to reiterate once again the need to deploy the observer force as soon as possible.

The Israeli policies and practices that deny the legitimate needs and aspirations of the Palestinian people will never be compatible with a legitimate peace process, based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). A just and lasting peace cannot be achieved in the Middle East until the Palestinian people exercise their legitimate right to establish an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital, until all the occupied Arab territories are returned, and until Israel withdraws from the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and the Syrian Golan to the 4 June 1967 border.

There will not be a lasting peace until the provocations in southern Lebanon end, until all Arabs arbitrarily and unjustly imprisoned, detained and frequently tortured in Israeli prisons are released, and until the illegal Israeli settlements are dismantled pursuant to Security Council resolution 465 (1980).

It is striking how some Council members, so ready to promote the idea of deploying humanitarian intervention, with or without Security Council authorization, when they decide that human rights situations must be remedied, in this case work to avoid enabling the Council or the General Assembly to act in exercise of the powers conferred on them by the Charter. Nothing could better illustrate what interests

are actually served by the calls for humanitarian intervention.

We all know why a different standard is applied in the case of Israel. This is the typical case of what happens when the United States, a permanent member of the Security Council and an ally of Israel, looking after its national interests, arbitrarily uses its privileges. Hypocrisy and double standards continue to prevail, sheltered by the anachronistic and antidemocratic privilege of the veto.

As long as the United Nations does not assume the direct and irreplaceable responsibility assigned to it by the Charter and by the will of the international community, and as long as it is hegemonic and narrow domestic policy objectives that determine the course of negotiations, there will not be peace. Nor will there be peace if the Israeli Government does not change its policy of colonial occupation and its flagrant, massive and systematic violation of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, and if it refuses to continue the negotiation process and to fulfil the commitments undertaken.

Cuba commends the position held by the Security Council members who are also members of the Non-Aligned Movement, as well as of the other Council members who have been making sincere efforts to try to have this Council fulfil its duties.

Cuba calls on the Security Council to act without further delay and in accordance with the seriousness of this crisis and its serious responsibilities. This body must immediately establish an observer force to protect the civilian Palestinian population. It must urge Israel to immediately cease its use of force and to implement the many resolutions on the question of the Middle East adopted by the Security Council and the General Assembly. This is the only path to a just and lasting peace.

Mr. Ould Deddach (Mauritania) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish at the outset to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your presidency of the Council for this month. I extend my thanks to your predecessor, Mr. Saïd Ben Mustapha, the Permanent Representative of Tunisia, for his wise steering of the Council last month.

We meet today, six months after the onset of the Palestinian popular uprising, which has led to hundreds of fallen martyrs and thousands injured. The Council discussed the situation in the occupied Arab Palestinian territories in meetings last October and December and has not reached an agreement to end the violence carried out against the Palestinian people. Many other initiatives have been taken and have not led to positive results.

The suffocating blockade that affects the Palestinian citizens in the occupied territories exposes the lives of innocent women, children and the elderly to tragedy and has an adverse impact on the Palestinian economic situation. We call for this blockade to be lifted and for a halt to violent acts against the Palestinian people, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1322 (2000), adopted on 7 October 2000.

The Mauritanian people and Government express their full solidarity with the Palestinian people and strongly condemn the repressive measures taken against them without justification, contravening the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which must be applied to the occupied Palestinian territories.

The Security Council is called upon today to assume its responsibility as guarantor of international peace and security by providing the necessary international protection to the Palestinian people through sending an international military observer force to the occupied territories, under the auspices of the United Nations. The Mauritanian delegation thus supports the draft resolution submitted to the Council by the Non-Aligned Movement. We hope it will be unanimously adopted as a first step to guaranteeing protection for the Palestinian people and to opening the possibility of returning the peace process to its proper track.

Mr. President, you undoubtedly know that these serious measures represent an impediment to achieving peace in the region, which needs it so desperately. On behalf of my delegation, I would like once again to reaffirm our support for the peace process. We believe that no just, comprehensive and durable peace can be achieved in the region except through the Madrid terms of reference, the principle of land for peace, the full implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions that guarantee a full Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian territories and all Arab occupied territories, and the restoration of all of the inalienable and legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, foremost of which is its right to self-determination and

to the establishment of an independent State, with Al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital.

The President: I thank the representative of Mauritania for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Morocco, whom I invite to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Zahid (Morocco) *(spoke in French)*: First of all, Mr. President, I wish to express my congratulations to you on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month of March. I also wish to thank you for the diligence with which you have convened this meeting of the Council to examine the grave situation in the Palestinian territories as a result of the increased repression of the Palestinian population and the tightening of the blockade around the Palestinian towns. May I also congratulate your predecessor, the Ambassador of Tunisia, who guided the work of the Council with remarkable competence, and who focused the international community's attention on the grave crisis confronting our African continent.

We listened very attentively to the many statements on the alarming, tragic and exasperating situation in the Palestinian territories, and Morocco wishes to echo all of the cries of distress and all of the appeals to reason that have been made from this rostrum.

For many months now, violence has ravaged the occupied Palestinian territories because of the impasse in the peace process and the repression, of which the civilian populations of these occupied territories are the victims. Persistent efforts have also been made to hold responsible the Palestinian victims of the violence. This violence unfortunately has been the echo of yet more violence and of many other acts of provocation. The grave deterioration in the security situation of the Palestinians has compounded the deterioration of their daily economic lives because of increasingly frequent and lengthy blockades. All the media have shown us images of children who cannot go to school and mothers who do not have any access to hospital. The Palestinian people should have been, and should be, spared this type of suffering, which has gone on now for half a century. These are conditions that can only exacerbate violence.

Morocco is very concerned at this explosive situation, which threatens the peace and security of the entire region, a region that is struggling for its right to peace, security, stability and prosperity. Hundreds of Palestinians, victims of Israeli violent excesses, and hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who are victims of the closures of Palestinian territories require urgent action on the part of the international community. We must ensure the protection of these civilian populations that have suffered so much and avoid the economic collapse of the young Palestinian State.

In order to re-launch the peace process, the repression and the economic sanctions against the Palestinian population must come to an end. It is for these reasons that, once again, we call upon Israel to comply with the relevant provisions of the Geneva Convention on the protection of civilian populations and that it put an end to the repression and to the closures that can only heighten the violence and reduce even further the chances for the peace process to resume and be successful. This process already has been made very fragile by the long crisis that the region has been experiencing for too long now.

Morocco is very concerned at the grim prospects for the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, and we associate ourselves with all the peace- and justice-loving States in asking that the Security Council establish appropriate measures to allow the Palestinian people to live in peace on their own territory. We are convinced that this is the only way likely to ensure the security of Israel itself, as well as that of the peace and security of the entire region. The Palestinian people must enjoy its inalienable rights, including its right to establish its own State on its own territory, with Al-Quds as its capital.

The Security Council should, without delay, once again consider sending a protection force to the occupied territories. At any cost it must also bring the Israeli authorities back to the negotiating process on the basis of the Madrid and Oslo agreements. In order to restore peace to the Middle East, the Palestinian people must recover all of their territory occupied since 1967. They must also be able to establish their State on their territory with Al-Quds as the capital. The path to peace, just like the path to security and prosperity in the region — and this includes for Israel — necessarily means a resumption of negotiations, an end to Israeli aggression and a withdrawal from all the Palestinian and Arab occupied territories, including Al-Quds al-Sharif, as well as the exercise by the Palestinian people

of their rights, in accordance with the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

The deterioration of the situation has now reached cataclysmic proportions. As we know, violence breeds more violence. The international community today has a more and more pressing obligation vis-à-vis the Palestinian people. Together we must undertake urgent action that responds to the gravity of the situation, to avoid the inevitable, for it is we, all of us, who will bear the responsibility.

The President: I thank the representative of Morocco for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Lebanon, whom I invite to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Tadmoury (Lebanon)*(spoke in Arabic)*: Mr. President, it gives me pleasure to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. I would also like to extend our thanks to your predecessor, the Ambassador of Tunisia, for the constructive efforts he deployed during his presidency last month.

It is regrettable and sad for us to witness the suffering, repression and killing of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories due to the excessive use of force by the Israeli occupation forces since last September. We are deeply concerned at the escalation of violent acts and the besieging of the occupied territories in an attempt to bring the Palestinians to their knees and to deprive them of their basic needs for survival. Israel, as an occupying power, has taken measures that represent a violation of the Palestinian citizens' human rights, in flagrant defiance of the Fourth Geneva Convention and related Protocols.

Mr. Abbas (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish at the outset, Sir, to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of March.

The Council is now engaged in a discussion of a long-standing, recurring issue of great seriousness; it must shoulder its responsibilities in a positive and effective manner. The situation in the occupied Palestinian territories has reached a stage at which it requires urgent, immediate and effective action by the Security Council in response to grave Israeli measures in a way that will secure international protection for the Palestinian people and its leadership. The Council should do its utmost to prevent a further deterioration, which would lead to heightened tension throughout the region.

Despite the international belief in the justice and legitimacy of the call for the deployment of an international protection force as soon as possible, Israel's intransigence and actions compel us to recall a number of points.

First, Israel is attempting to prevent the Council from adopting a binding resolution, once again branding it as a country that lacks commitment to resolutions of international legitimacy, to international law and to the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949. That does not surprise us. There is nothing to deter Israel from such a course.

Secondly, when it is exposed for what it is, Israel tries to protect itself and to conceal its true nature with the assistance of a permanent member of the Security Council, with a view to stopping the Council from condemning it for all its oppressive measures and for its war of genocide against the Palestinian people. Israel makes these attempts because international bodies have started to expose its inhumane policies. Here it is worth mentioning the recent 14 March report (E/CN.4/2001/121) of the human rights inquiry commission established pursuant to Commission on Human Rights resolution S-5/1 of 19 October 2000, on human rights violations in the occupied territories. We urge Council members to heed the recommendation set out in paragraph 11 of chapter X, part II of that report. That recommendation reflects the magnitude of the tragedy, which is no secret to anyone.

Thirdly, Israel's attempts to pre-empt Security Council resolutions, especially resolution 1322 (2000), and the resolutions of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly are making it more difficult for the Council to adopt the urgent measures that the situation calls for. This is in addition to Israel's continuous attempts to divert attention from its colonialism at a time when the old form of colonialism has totally disappeared. Such prevarication is aimed at muddying the issues to enable Israel to present itself as a country under occupation, and not a country that occupies the land of others. That prevarication and procrastination are no secret. No one can argue that the occupation is not the essence of the crisis. Israel treats the world with utter contempt, despite its occupation,

which has lasted too long and which has caused the situation to explode.

Fourthly, Israel continues deliberately to prevaricate, at a time when no one would deny its request for security. But the truth about Israel's position is now well known to the international community: it reflects only Israel's colonialist leanings. Israel is taking all these measures and making all these attempts to prevent the Council from adopting any resolution that would run counter to its own viewpoint or would block its aspirations. The sponsors of this behaviour, notably the United States of America, should shoulder their responsibility and make the necessary effort to put the peace talks back on track, rather than maintain a policy of a double standard, which was a distinguishing mark of the previous United States Administration. That would enhance the credibility of the Security Council, which is needed more than ever before.

The League of Arab States has always expressed its interest in a comprehensive, just and lasting peace for all the countries of the region, and has made that position well known in every regional and international context, notably before the Security Council. Given its Charter responsibilities, in view of the gravity of the situation and in the light of the statements made thus far in this debate, the Council should, first, take all necessary steps to enable all parties to overcome the present situation and to put an end to the tragedy suffered by the Palestinian people by adopting the draft resolution that has been before the Council since last December; this would set matters straight and would revitalize the Middle East peace process.

Secondly, the Council should unambiguously reiterate to Israel that a just peace will provide true security and that such a peace can be achieved only by implementing resolutions of international legitimacy, by the total withdrawal of Israeli forces from territories occupied since 1967 and by making possible the establishment of an independent State of Palestine with Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 181 (II), which recognized the existence of two States in Palestine within the borders of the Mandate. Any other settlement will be doomed to failure.

Thirdly, the Council should move with the utmost speed to attain the objectives of international legitimacy, as reflected particularly in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and in General Assembly resolution 194 (III), as well as in the Madrid peace agreements.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Indonesia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Widodo (Indonesia): Let me begin by expressing my delegation's sincere congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I should like to commend His Excellency Mr. Said Ben Mustapha of Tunisia for his skilful leadership in conducting the work of the Council last month.

My delegation believes that the convening of this urgent meeting was both timely and appropriate in the light of the tragedy of incalculable proportions unfolding in the occupied Palestinian territories. My delegation therefore cannot but voice its profound concern and deepening dismay at a worsening situation which could have the gravest ramifications not only for the Middle East region in particular but for the world at large.

The international community is witnessing an intensification of violence resulting in hundreds of Palestinian casualties, including women and children. Such a development, together with the imposition of a siege of Palestinian territories, has caused severe restrictions on movements of goods and persons, thereby reversing the positive trends of previous years and placing the nascent economy in sharp decline. The tragic situation prevailing in the occupied territories can only deepen the feelings of desperation, hatred and violence and can only bring about more violence.

Last Thursday we listened to statements by Member States in the Security Council. It is only fair to say that they expressed a positive view of the provision of an international observer force in the Palestinian territories. This force would be established with a view to protecting the Palestinians from the excessive use of force by Israel, providing for their basic security needs and helping them in rejecting occupation and in their search to establish their own State, an idea that enjoys widespread international support.

The dispatch of an international observer force is only a small step and not a solution to the occupation of the Palestinian territories by Israel since 1967. It does not call for suspicion, hesitation and rejection.

One of the positive aspects of dispatching such an observer force would be to provide reasonable conditions that would enable the parties to go back to negotiations in order to continue on their path towards peace; another would be its embodiment of the international community's willingness to find peaceful and acceptable solutions within the framework of international legitimacy.

The Security Council is called upon today, more than ever before, in the light of the new political environment in Israel, to provide assistance to the Palestinian people and to alleviate the suffering that they are unjustly facing every day. These actions would be in the Security Council's interest in the context of the maintenance of international peace and security. It would only be opportune for the Council to establish an international observer force as a first step on the road to peace.

It is worth mentioning here that the just, comprehensive and lasting solution that would secure the interests of all the warring parties in the region can be achieved only through the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and General Assembly resolution 194 (III), within the framework of the principle of land for peace and in accordance with the Madrid terms of reference, while also taking into account the important achievements that have been reached in past negotiations.

Peace and security have their own requirements. Israel, as a society and as a Government, should be prepared to accept that, beginning with the recognition of the legitimate rights of others.

The President: I thank the representative of Lebanon for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is Mr. Mokhtar Lamani, Permanent Observer of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to the United Nations, to whom the Council has extended an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Lamani (*spoke in French*): I would like to express on behalf of the Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference our concern over the human and material suffering and losses incurred by the Palestinian people following the acts of aggression directed against that people and the practices that have already cost the lives of the hundreds of Palestinians and have resulted in thousands of injured persons, as well as in the destruction of the infrastructure in the territories — a direct consequence of the policy of blockading and encircling the Palestinian territories by the occupying power, Israel.

Nevertheless, we have had good reason to believe that the Security Council, faced with the deterioration of the situation, would not remain inert and impassive, particularly since the international community has mobilized itself behind the Palestinian people. One can see tangible proof in the statements of the previous speakers in this Chamber. Even the reprehensible actions which the other party considers subversive are only a clear and evident demonstration of the root of the original problem, which so far has not been dealt with in depth, and that is the Palestinian problem.

However, these acts cannot justify the policy of sanctions and collective punishment designed to starve an entire people. It is specifically this people that is the last one not to have achieved the right to self-determination. We must bear in mind that all the cataclysms, which for more than 50 years have continued to batter the Middle East, have their epicentre in the tragedy imposed on the Palestinian people.

Peace, security and the prosperity of the region will remain unattained, with serious risks that these disturbances will spread, as long as an adequate solution, in conformity with the resolutions of this body and of the General Assembly, is not implemented, one that guarantees the right to a dignified and peaceful life for all of the peoples of the region. Harmonious cohabitation necessarily implies the right of the other to existence, through the dismantling of the settlements and the end of the occupation. That is the real condition for genuine peace: allowing the Palestinians to have sovereignty over a homogeneous and uninterrupted territory.

It is certainly not with more repression, blockading of Palestinian territory and measures of collective punishment that peace will be further consolidated. Indeed, these measures and practices can only serve to exacerbate the frustrations and increased feeling of dependence regarding the occupying power, Israel.

In this situation, the Organization of the Islamic Conference calls upon the international community to act immediately and effectively to put an end to the Israeli actions against the Palestinian people. The onerous sacrifices made by that people are likely to be nullified by the collapse of its economy and its fragile infrastructure. Given the intransigence of the Israeli Administration and its insistence on trying to place on the Palestinians the responsibility for its policy of provocation and rejection of commitments undertaken, the situation in the region is thus a very serious one. It is a real threat to peace in the region and even in the world.

In accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and its past resolutions adopted on this subject, the Security Council must try to provide for the Palestinians the necessary protection that they hope for and to lift unjust and repeated blockades. This is a preliminary step to the establishment of a climate conducive to the resumption of the peace process at the point where it left off and on the basis of principles that made it possible to begin in Madrid a decade ago, namely, the respective resolutions of the Security Council and the principles of right and of international legality.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is Mr. Ali Ahmed Abbas, Deputy Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations, to whom the Council has extended an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement. The dire consequences of the present state of affairs are clear to all: the unacceptable loss of lives and property, the perpetuation of economic misery and violations of human rights that affect the lives of an entire people and nation. Worse still, these policies of the occupying Power have heightened feelings of fear, despair and anger, while destroying all trust and confidence in the peace process. Such an untenable situation should not be allowed to continue.

This body is mandated by the Charter to maintain international peace and security. It therefore cannot stand idly by and fail to shoulder its responsibility to take urgent and necessary action at this critical juncture. On 18 December 2000, the Security Council did not adopt a draft resolution due to the lack of necessary votes. That draft resolution would have dispatched a mission comprising military and police observers to stop the deterioration on the ground. If that had been the case, a needless loss of Palestinian lives would have been averted, and the violence would have been contained.

The Council should therefore brook no further delay in implementing such actions, for no amount of convoluted logic or pretexts can justify inaction on its part. Undeniably, one human life lost is one too many. How then can the international community, in all good conscience, justify non-action — on any grounds — when scores of Palestinian people are being killed every day?

In view of the pressing circumstances, my delegation believes that the Security Council has no alternative but to intervene at the present time and to deploy a United Nations monitoring force in the occupied territories, in order to stop the killing of innocent civilians, ease tensions on the ground and bring about normalcy as soon as possible.

Furthermore, the task of restoring and fostering a climate of trust between the two sides will, hopefully, lead to the resumption of the peace process. In addition, in a time of crisis, it is important for the concerned parties to bear in mind that the momentum of the Sharm el-Sheikh memorandum and the Tabah talks should not be diminished and that the arduous efforts of the past 10 years cannot be in vain, so that future generations of the people in the region will be able to coexist in peace and harmony.

In conclusion, we hold steadfast to the view that the basic elements of a peaceful settlement remain unchanged and that a comprehensive peace can be attained only through the unfettered exercise of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including the establishment of their own independent homeland. My delegation also believes that the United Nations has a historical and moral responsibility regarding the question of Palestine, the core issue of the Middle East conflict, and should remain closely engaged in the process of bringing about a just and lasting peace.

The President: I thank the representative of Indonesia for the kind words he addressed to me.

The representative of Israel has asked to speak, and I now call on him.

Mr. Lancry (Israel) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, I should like to thank you for the opportunity to speak once again, at the end of this

meeting of the Security Council on the situation in our region.

Israel has every reason to consider that this dialogue with the Security Council was undertaken, in particular by Mr. Shimon Peres, Minister for Foreign Affairs, in a spirit of openness and as a constructive and frank exchange of views leading to greater understanding.

We have taken note of the satisfaction voiced by the members of the Council regarding this more intensive dialogue between Israel and the United Nations. Indeed, our country, after acceding to the regional Group of Western European and Other States — thereby putting an end to 40 years of exclusion — following its withdrawal from southern Lebanon, in full conformity with Security Council resolution 425 (1978), now finds itself much more in step with the United Nations.

We have also noted an increased awareness among members of the Security Council of the true nature of the intifada, in particular of its terrorist dimension, and of the need to condemn in no uncertain terms — as we felt was the case for several members of the Council — the unacceptable and murderous practice of Palestinian terrorism.

Although this condemnation of the terrorist practices of the Palestinians seems at times to be slightly muted and is certainly voiced in a carefully crafted type of rhetoric, it is still perceptible, and although in some cases it is presented in a veiled or understated manner, nevertheless it is healthy and useful for a return to the logic of peace as well as for the fundamental credibility of the Security Council.

We would hope, however, that those who support the notion of Israel's excessive use of force — without the slightest concern for a more serious and in-depth consideration of the facts — might also be able to denounce Palestinian terrorism as an incredibly sacrilegious practice and an untenable setback that undermines the very foundation of the peace process.

Several countries that are not members of the Security Council have also taken part in this debate. We were particularly sensitive to the reiterated appeals for a return to negotiation and to the rhetoric and logic of peace. Those notable appeals also were observed in several statements by Permanent Representatives of Arab countries. Here I am certainly not thinking of the dubious contribution of the Permanent Representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. Every so often, here or in the General Assembly, we are witness to Libya's outrageously inaccurate rewriting of the history of the Jewish people in both ancient and modern times. Nor will the Iraqi or Iranian statements contribute to an Israeli-Palestinian-Arab peace.

But, in all sincerity, the statement made by Algeria — despite its highly partial nature — had value, as its conclusion contained a most commendable phrase: "a just and lasting solution to the Middle East conflict". Coming from a country that itself is experiencing a latent conflict and which has been engaged in a desperate search for domestic peace, which it fully deserves and which we very much wish to see, that comment takes on emblematic significance.

Certain States Members of the United Nations, headed by Egypt, have identified the Israeli occupation as the cause of the current crisis and of the frustration of the Palestinian people.

Let us recall, first of all, that the driving force of territorial compromise lies at the heart of the Oslo accords. That principle has been put into practice since the signing of the Oslo accords, with the result that 97 per cent of the Palestinian population and 42 per cent of the Palestinian territories are under Palestinian control. Since its adoption, that principle has never been challenged by any Israeli Government, including the Government of National Unity, which has just come to power.

Having made that useful and necessary comment in the interests of dispelling any ambiguity, I now find myself obliged to take the Security Council back, as briefly as possible, over the recent history of the Israeli-Palestinian-Arab conflict.

The Israeli occupation of June 1967 did not come as a bolt from the blue. It was the result of an attempt by part of the Arab world — the immediate neighbours of Israel, with Egypt, under Nasser, at the forefront — to proceed to the prompt annihilation of Israel.

We should also recall, as Mr. Shimon Peres did a few days ago, a further revealing and significant fact: for 19 years, between 1948 — the time of its first abortive attempt to eliminate Israel — and 1967, Egypt, which today is engaged in denouncing the Israeli occupation, was itself the occupying Power in the Gaza Strip.

Similarly, between 1948 and 1967, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan held the destiny of the West Bank in its hands. During that period, it never occurred to either Jordan or Egypt to establish in those territories a Palestinian State, which could have been done at that time.

We Israelis will certainly never forget the rare and dazzling appearance of the far-sighted genius of President Anwar Al-Sadat, who, with his exceptional generosity of deed and word and through his unique vision contributed to setting our region on the road to peace and enabling it to dream of reconciliation. Following in his wake, the noble presence of His Majesty King Hussein of Jordan also strengthened the establishment of peace in our region.

The initial peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan were achievements through which Israel was able to show its historical commitment to compromise, peace and reconciliation. Egypt and Jordan certainly remain essential driving forces for the expansion of peace in our region.

However, an inevitable question arises. I must raise this question even though it concerns the statement made by an ambassador whom I consider to be a personal friend — one who, furthermore, addressed me directly at the end of his statement. I am sure that the Council understands that I am referring to the Permanent Representative of Egypt, Ambassador Ahmed Aboulgheit.

I asked myself what could be the reason for the deliberately virulent nature of his statement — a speech whose accusatory tone was firmly in line with the anti-Israeli attitude that is favoured by certain Egyptian journalists from the institutionalized or private press. I believe that I would not be exaggerating if I were to say that Ambassador Ahmed Aboulgheit's statement is completely interchangeable with the relentlessly racist anti-Israeli columns that the Egyptian press continues to dispense with careless frenzy on a daily basis.

Furthermore, in considering Ambassador Aboulgheit's lengthy discourse — his insidious insinuations about the superiority of Israeli blood over that of the Palestinians — I believe that his statement, which at the very least was inappropriate, represents some of the worst demagoguery ever heard in the Council.

But above and beyond the polemics between the representatives of two countries linked by a peace agreement, we must also wonder about some of the underlying motives of Egyptian society regarding Israeli-Palestinian relationships. The idea is to understand the reasons, whether manifest or latent, that are leading a considerable part of the intelligentsia and opinion-makers in Egypt to advocate a rejection of Israel, to the point of sometimes appearing more Palestinian than the Palestinians themselves.

It is not difficult to see that that intelligentsia, through a painful and growing awareness, is struggling with an enormous guilt complex — one that is rooted in the perception of the flagrant historical responsibility of its country, Egypt, for the disasters that were visited on the Palestinians in 1948 and 1967. It is precisely here that we find the essence of the problem of the relationship with Israel for an intelligentsia that is all too ready to demonize the Israeli people in order to satisfy its urgent need to give expression to these feelings and to alleviate, even to a small degree, its enormous burden of guilt.

All of this would be of secondary importance if it were not for the adverse influence that such attitudes and speeches can have on the development of peace between Israel and a large part of the Arab world.

In his statement, the Permanent Representative of Tunisia, Ambassador Said Ben Mustapha, asked "What does Israel expect?" (*S/PV.4295, p. 12*) given that the Palestinian request amounts to 22 per cent of the territories.

My answer is very simple: Israel expects to be able to survive after the final Israeli-Palestinian agreement. Israel expects its territory, as delimited within secure and recognized borders in the aftermath of the final agreement, not to be the object of a demographic reworking, as stipulated by the Palestinians with regard to the right of return of refugees.

Everyone understands that the right of return of the Palestinian refugees, if it were to be carried out in accordance with Yasser Arafat's ideas — that is, the potential establishment of 4 million Palestinian refugees in Israeli territory, which goes far beyond the establishment of a Palestinian State that would result from a final agreement — would effectively amount to the programmed death of Israel as a State. Israel does

not, therefore, expect to die for the sake of an agreement accompanied by demographic inundation. It is such denial — which, for the sake of convenience, I will refer to as "demographic denial" — compounded by spiritual denial and denial of the very identity of the holy Jewish sites in Jerusalem, that characterizes the Palestinian position.

Furthermore, that double denial is the underlying reason for Yasser Arafat's refusal to sign a final agreement with the Barak Government. That double denial, as we know all too well, is the true reason for the Palestinian uprising fuelled by violence and terrorism.

To be sure, the word "occupation" as applied to the territories of 1967 seems, a priori, to be the easiest explanation for Palestinian frustration. But we also need to ensure that Israel's right to exist is also fixed in the Palestinian consciousness in particular and, more generally, in that of several countries — Arab or Muslim — such as Libya, Iran and Iraq, which continue to preach daily the eradication of the State of Israel.

That lengthy digression was required not only as a response to questions and to the comments of some of my colleagues with regard to the roots of the present Israeli-Palestinian crisis, but also as a means of shedding necessary light on the issue and recalling a reality that is far more complex than the simplistic dichotomy of occupier and occupied.

As we have repeatedly said, Israel is resolute in its quest to see peace and security extended to our entire region. With a view to doing so, we would like to resume dialogue and negotiation with our Palestinian partners. In order to resume that dialogue there is a crucial need to break the cycle of violence and to rebuild confidence. It is up to the Palestinians and the Israelis, linked by their agreements and their mutual recognition, to decide to do this as soon as possible. Any diversionary tactics, such as calling for an international protection force, will only serve to hamper a return to a bilateral process.

It goes without saying that sending an international protection force while the intifada and terrorism are raging — and against the wishes of one of the parties, namely, Israel — is tantamount to sanctioning the Palestinian strategic choice of trying to achieve political objectives through terrorism. Such an endorsement by the Security Council would strip the Oslo accords of their substance and remove one of the main pillars on which they are built.

This is the reason why Israel is firmly opposed to a resolution sending an international protection force, and why it hopes to convince the Security Council of its own logic regarding the establishment of an international mission. That logic would more likely lead to the endorsement of a peace agreement — whether an interim one, as was the case with Hebron, or a final one, as was the case with Egypt — in order to ensure its proper implementation, than to a premature intervention in a situation in which violence and terrorism are improperly seeking the cover of international legitimacy.

The President: The Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations has asked for the floor.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am in fact not really certain of the nature of the statement we have just heard. Is it an attempt to exercise the right of reply or is it the second statement by Israel during the same meeting of the Security Council? The more important question is perhaps about its content, which, to say the least, is a reflection of the usual Israeli arrogance and intransigence. In fact, we had thought that the Israeli Ambassador would have made a different speech, but it seems that we are all supposed to be committed to the official statement he made earlier.

I would like to refer once again to the meeting that took place between Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and the Security Council and to the results of that meeting. Various press agencies have today quoted Mr. Peres as follows:

(*spoke in English*)

> "'Negotiations with the Palestinians will not be resumed as long as the Palestinians continue calling on the United Nations to station observers in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip', Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said on Monday."

(*spoke in Arabic*)

I do not really know whether that constitutes a threat to us or a threat to the members of the Security Council. Why are the Israelis rejecting negotiations? One of the parties is merely resorting to the Council, in accordance with international law and without having violated any of the agreements signed between the two

parties, for the purpose of restoring the situation to what it was so as to bring about peace. Israeli logic here is quite different from Israeli logic as we know it.

I would now like to refer to the content of the statement made by the representative of Israel and to the expressions he used, specifically his reference to the "terrorist" aspect of the intifada and so on.

This of course represents a serious and dangerous return to the lexicon that prevailed before the advent of the peace process. We, on the other hand, are speaking in an objective manner about the serious violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention being committed by the occupying Power, as well as about the war crimes that have been perpetrated by that Power. If the Israeli side insists, then we too are prepared to use the same expressions that were in use before the peace process began.

Another point I wish to make has to do with the fact that the Israeli Ambassador indicated that 97 per cent of the Palestinian people and 42 per cent of Palestinian territory are under Palestinian control. These figures lie, of course, given the fact that occupied Jerusalem itself has over 200,000 Palestinians. We also know that over half of the land under the control of the Palestinian Authority remains under the security control of Israeli forces. What is important to note here is that the Israelis believe that it is acceptable for Palestinians to live in isolated cantons, and that it is even a good thing. This in fact is a reflection of racist thinking that is no different from racial discrimination under apartheid and the establishment of bantustans in South Africa.

Perhaps it would have been possible to make such claims about the Palestinian people actually being under the control of the Palestinian Authority in many forums prior to the beginning of the actions that started six months ago — that is, before the imposition of siege, blockades, strangulation and all the other types of suffering we have experienced. It would be extremely ludicrous and unacceptable to talk about such issues as Israel no longer being an occupying Power due to the supposed fact that the Palestinian people are under the control of the Palestinian Authority.

We would have liked to hear something more serious and quite different. In fact, the main issue is the occupation. The essence of the tragedy is that the Israeli side does not want to understand that, and that is the reason we find ourselves in this position. I hope this situation will not deteriorate because of such persistence and insistence.

The Israeli Ambassador did not like the reference made by another colleague to the importance of not distinguishing between Israeli blood and Palestinian blood. What is the problem here? What is the problem concerning not distinguishing between the blood of both sides? The problem is that the positions taken by Israel and Israeli officials affirm our suspicions that they believe that Israeli blood is more precious and more valuable than Palestinian blood. How, when there are 10 times as many Palestinian victims, can we talk about Palestinians as the real cause of the present tragedy? What is worse is that the Israeli Ambassador made many accusations against Palestinians in his first statement. These accusations can only mean that the Palestinians are very strange and abnormal creatures. They are not human beings because they are happy when they are repressed; they seek repression, and they are very happy when their children are killed. What do these accusations mean? How can we accuse an entire unarmed people of practising force and violence against the most powerful military force in the Middle East? What does this mean?

The Israeli Ambassador has also talked about something another colleague had mentioned, concerning the essence of the Israeli position rejecting the Palestinian position on the return of refugees. This is not the situation in Palestine. Of course, we say that it is important to preserve the rights of Palestinian refugees. We emphasize that Israel should accept in principle its obligations and responsibilities vis-à-vis the Palestinian refugees and their right to return and that compensation should be given to those refugees who do not wish to return, in accordance with international law.

But this is only half of the truth. We have also said that we are prepared to negotiate with the Israeli side on certain mechanisms that would take into consideration all Israeli fears, including Israel's security requirements. Even if the Israeli side does not accept this, it should not depict our position as a request for Israel to commit suicide. Therefore, there is a conceptual problem here.

The Ambassador said that President Arafat has refused to sign an agreement with Mr. Barak despite the many concessions made by Mr. Barak. This is not

true. We talked about this in our earlier statement and we will not repeat what we have already said. But what is important now is what Mr. Sharon, the present Prime Minister, is actually saying about the peace process.

Will Israel accept the resumption of negotiations, or will it try to avoid this, giving various pretexts and excuses, pretexts that it has created and for which it is responsible? Will Israel accept the resumption of negotiations at the point at which they were suspended? Will Israel take into account the progress that has been made? Even more importantly, will Israel accept responsibility for the agreements already concluded and thus negotiate the final status?

Or would Israel like to destroy all this and impose a new transitional process on the Palestinian people? This is what the Israeli Prime Minister is actually saying in public: he would like to put aside all agreements concluded until now. The Israeli Ambassador then comes here to lecture us about Israel's peaceful position.

Until now, we have not understood the reason for Israel's rejection of the establishment of an observer force under the auspices of the United Nations. What is the real reason for that? The Israelis used to talk about the internationalization of the problem and the fact that Israel rejects the internationalization of the problem. Perhaps they have concluded that this is not really acceptable. They have talked about the fact that video cameras and the mass media are more dangerous than acts of violence. They have not given us a reason for this. The accusations they are making against the Palestinians are false, and the mass media will come to reveal the acts of violence carried out by Israel against the Palestinians.

He posed the question, if the Palestinian side "renounces" violent acts when military observers are invited, is it really rejecting violence? Our answer is that we believe that the presence of the observers would contribute positively to controlling all forms and acts of violence. It would also contribute to restoring the situation to what it was before 28 September, until we reach an agreement on the final status.

What is the problem here? The problem here is that the international community has hesitated before Israeli intransigence, the reason being that the most powerful member of the Security Council continues to support Israel. Israel is not forced to deal seriously with the Security Council because of the Council's continuous hesitation before Israel. Who could do this? How can a Minister for Foreign Affairs, after a Security Council meeting, threaten the Palestinian side by saying, "If you go to the Security Council, we will not resume negotiations." Why is this?

We extend our thanks, of course, to all the countries that have participated in the discussion during these two days. In fact, the majority of these countries have spoken very positively. Once again, we thank them all for their positions.

There are a few speakers who have used logic with which we have a problem. Such logic contributes to the present Israeli position.

Our problem is in establishing a dialogue with those few States, thus reaching a so-called artificial balance. We have a legal, political and moral problem vis-à-vis this so-called artificial balance. In fact, we do not accept any comparison between the power of the occupation force and the power of the people subjugated by this occupation. There is no comparison. In truth, we are very worried about the hesitation of those few countries in the face of the escalation of Israeli repression against the Palestinian people. The problem is that those few countries believe, whenever Israel eases the blockade and siege that have been imposed, that this is a positive thing. Why? How can we deem positive the easing of the blockade instead of calling for a halt to such a blockade? This is an invitation to Israel to intensify the blockade imposed on the Palestinians whenever it faces a problem. That is why they are behaving this way. Whenever Israel faces any form of criticism it escalates its aggressive measures; then it returns to the previous situation; then we, the representatives of the international community, applaud Israel for such behaviour. Is this logical or reasonable?

We are calling upon you, Mr. President, and the Council, to commit yourselves to upholding the minimum of international law, international humanitarian law and the provisions of the Security Council resolutions. This is all we are asking for — nothing more. Do not support any position that does not serve the peace process. Do not support any position that calls upon you to go beyond international law. It is our right to call upon the Security Council to take up its responsibilities in accordance with the provisions of international law and of its own resolutions, and even in accordance with the peace

agreements signed between the Palestinians and the Israelis, as well as the Charter, and to take the necessary measures to provide minimum protection for the Palestinian people and to halt this tragedy that is occurring in Palestine. Mr. President, this is what we want you to do.

We will try to approach this with an open mind and an open heart, and we hope that it will come about in order to send the correct message to the two parties so that the Security Council can finally contribute to changing this rapidly deteriorating situation.

The President: There are no further speakers on my list for this meeting. The next meeting of the Security Council to continue the consideration of the item on the agenda will be fixed in consultation with the members of the Council.

The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.4295 (Resumption 2)*

Security Council

Fifty-sixth year

Provisional

4295th meeting

Monday, 19 March 2001, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Yel'chenko	(Ukraine)
Members:	Bangladesh	Mr. Ahsan
	China	Mr. Wang Yingfan
	Colombia	Mr. Valdivieso
	France	Mr. Levitte
	Ireland	Mr. Ryan
	Jamaica	Miss Durrant
	Mali	Mr. Issouf Oumar Maiga
	Mauritius	Mr. Neewoor
	Norway	Mr. Kolby
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Singapore	Mr. Mahbubani
	Tunisia	Mr. Ben Mustapha
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Jeremy Greenstock
	United States of America	Mr. Cunningham

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

Letter dated 13 March 2001 from the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2001/216).

* Reissued for technical reasons.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

01-29340* (E)

The meeting was resumed at 3.15 p.m. on Monday, 19 March 2001.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Indonesia and Lebanon, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Widodo (Indonesia) and Mr. Tadmoury (Lebanon) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 16 March 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Malaysia to the United Nations, which reads as follows:

> "I have the honour, in my capacity as Chairman of the Islamic Group at the United Nations, to request that the Security Council extend an invitation to His Excellency Mr. Mokhtar Lamani, Permanent Observer of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to the United Nations, to participate in the Council's discussion on the agenda item 'The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question', without the right to vote, under rule 39 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Council. "

That letter has been issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/2001/235.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 to Mr. Lamani.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 15 March 2001 from the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations, which reads as follows:

> "In my capacity as Chairman of the Arab Group for the month of March 2001, I have the honour to request that the Security Council address an invitation, in accordance with rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure, to Mr. Ali Ahmed Abbas, Deputy Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations, to participate in Council deliberations on the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory."

That letter has been issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/2001/236.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 to Mr. Abbas.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Pakistan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Ahmad (Pakistan): My first word must be one of gratitude to you, Mr. President, for suspending the debate on Friday and carrying it over the weekend. Whether you say it or not, I take it that, since I was travelling overseas, you awaited my return so that I could come and make this statement personally today. I am indeed privileged to be the first speaker this afternoon in this important meeting.

Once again we return to this Chamber, as we have done so many times before, to discuss the issue of Palestine, an issue which, like others, remains on the agenda of this Council, unresolved.

As the Council will recall, on 4 October last year, in this very room, we spoke of the image of that small child, Mohammed Al-Durra, lying at his father's side as the last breath of life slipped out of him. This was, as I said then, "only one glimpse of the fate that is suffered by thousands of children in different parts of the world that are under foreign occupation or in conflict situations" (*S/PV.4204 (Resumption 1), p. 4*). The tragedy is that, in these last five months, scores more of innocent people have died. I ask the Council again: are the killings of children not sufficient reminders that a part of humanity dies each time an innocent life is snuffed by violence?

We have debated in this very Chamber the issue of Palestine for well over half a century. The international community has unequivocally pronounced

its support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. Security Council resolutions have also called for Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories. Yet the Palestinians have not been given the land that is theirs by right. Peace in the Middle East still remains as elusive as ever. As the Council's resolutions remain unimplemented, the Palestinian people and others in similar circumstances continue to be deprived of their right of self-determination. While we have waited for this body to act and to implement its own resolutions, flickers of hope have turned into ashes of despair. Unfortunately, power politics and political expediency have continued to disable this body in addressing its Charter obligations.

The present deteriorating situation no doubt warrants our urgent attention. The international community must act with determination to prevent the situation from worsening. There are two issues at stake here. The first is of a more immediate nature: the protection of the Palestinian people, who are being subjected to the repressive and disproportionate use of force as well as virtual economic strangulation. We urge the Security Council to take the necessary measures to protect the Palestinian people by deploying a United Nations observer force in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem. Such a measure is the least that can be done to prevent the aggravation of the situation on the ground.

In addition, further actions need to be taken to end the violence in Palestine. As in the case of other peoples under foreign occupation, Pakistan has been a steadfast supporter of the just struggle of the Palestinian people for their inalienable rights. The international community, particularly the guarantors of the peace process, must use their influence and good offices to ensure full Israeli compliance with the peace agreements and with its legal obligations and responsibilities as an occupying Power, under the Fourth Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949.

The second issue is the broader, fundamental issue of the realization by the Palestinians of their inalienable rights. This involves a concerted approach aimed at the restoration of the peace process. It is essential to facilitate the fulfilment of all agreements reached and to implement Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) in order to avert the region's return to conflict. We urge the parties concerned to take the necessary measures to end hostilities and restore calm. In this regard we also call on the Security Council to take urgent steps to safeguard peace and security in the region.

Last year we saw bold steps taken in the direction of peace. But soon thereafter we also saw how the provocative actions of some individuals severely undermined the progress towards peace. This progress now stands blocked by intransigence. The international community must not allow the continuation of such a state of affairs, which could only wreck the future of the Middle East. Instead, the Israeli leadership must be compelled to return to the negotiating table in good faith. The process of peace, which has been so cruelly derailed, needs to be urgently put back on track.

We believe that no lasting peace in the Middle East would be possible without achieving a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. The realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territory, including the dismantling of illegal settlements, are essential for any meaningful progress in the peace process.

An overarching peace settlement for the Middle East question, by definition, must also include the vacation of the Syrian Govan Heights by Israel and full respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Lebanon. Long-term stability and security for all in the region can be guaranteed only on the basis of the principle of land for peace.

Prompt action is therefore required, particularly by the Security Council, to protect the Palestinians, to ensure the safety and sanctity of Al-CDs Al-Sheriff and to facilitate the realization of the national rights of the Palestinian people. The prospects of peace in that region once again rest with this body. How many more innocent people will have to die, and not just in Palestine but also in other "forgotten" conflict areas, like Kashmir, before this Council finds the resolve and capability to fulfil its own responsibilities and Charter obligations? How long shall we continue to wait for the oppressed peoples in all parts of the world to regain their fundamental rights and for the conscience of humanity to awaken to the imperatives of justice and fair play?

The President: I thank the representative of Pakistan for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of New Zealand. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. MacKay (New Zealand): New Zealanders are dismayed at the continuation of violence in Israel and the occupied territories. It is clear from over half a century of conflict that neither violence nor repression holds any hope for creating peace and security.

New Zealand firmly condemns all terrorist actions. The targeting of civilians promotes fear and hatred. It is for that reason that we urge both sides to refrain from such actions and that we urge Israel to lift its siege on the towns of the occupied territories. Just as terrorist bombs hurt indiscriminately, so too do the restrictions on the movements of ordinary Palestinians. The blockade of the Palestinian population is disproportionate to the threat Israel faces, and it cannot provide the security that Israel seeks. Instead, it will simply provide more fertile ground in which extremist groups can seek to expand their destructive causes.

We also urge Israel to release the tax payments due to the Palestinian Authority. The withholding of those funds, combined with the economic effects of the closure of Gaza and the West Bank, has caused a dire situation in the occupied territories. The loss of work and hope only increases the desperation of the Palestinian population. All conflict has an economic and social dimension, and the destruction of the Palestinian economy serves no one, but greatly increases human suffering.

New Zealand calls on the leaders of both parties to find a way past the distrust and to work together to provide a viable future for both their peoples.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): The delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic congratulates you, Sir, and your friendly country, Ukraine, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of March. We wish you every success as you shoulder the important responsibilities of the presidency. We moreover thank you, Sir, and the other members of the Security Council for your speedy response to the request by the Arab Group and by the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) to convene an urgent Council meeting to discuss escalated repressive Israeli practices and measures against Palestinian civilians in the occupied territories.

My delegation wishes also to commend your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Saïd Ben Mustapha, Permanent Representative of brotherly Tunisia, for his wise guidance of the Council's work last month.

My delegation endorses the statement made here last Thursday by the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates on behalf of the Arab Group. Our return to the Security Council today to speak of the tragic situation faced by the Palestinian people reflects our firm belief that it is important for the Council to shoulder its responsibilities under the Charter and in the light of the resolutions it has adopted over many years with a view to resolving the explosive situation in the Middle East, which poses a threat to international peace and security. It is also a result of Israel's stubborn determination to use brutal military force, and of its disdain for the Palestinians. These are unique in the modern world in terms of violations of international law and international humanitarian law, and especially of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949.

What is taking place in the towns and villages of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in full view of the world is a terrible massacre, in the fullest meaning of that word. It is, in fact, methodical genocide. As they lie asleep in their homes, as they walk in the street, as they express their inherent right to reject Israeli occupation and its continued repression, Palestinians — women, children and old people — are being killed by the aircraft, tanks and missiles of the Israeli forces. A document published by the United States organization International Action Center indicates that Israel has actually used depleted-uranium munitions against Palestinian civilians and Palestinian institutions. That United States organization stresses that it has proof that the Israeli forces have used munitions of that kind.

Over these four months, more than 400 children, women and other innocent civilians have been martyred as a result of Israel's policy to kill, and more than 15,000 have been injured; these people suffer from permanent disabilities that may affect them for the rest of their lives. What, then, is this international

organization waiting for before it adopts a serious resolution that will put an end to all such Israeli practices? Are we waiting for hundreds or thousands more Palestinians to be killed, or for thousands more to be injured and permanently disabled? Are we waiting for more Palestinian homes to be destroyed and their owners displaced? Are we waiting for the uprooting of thousands more fruit trees and the destruction of their environment, and for the land to be turned into a wasteland?

In practice, permitting Israel to continue its policies means Palestinian genocide. The *Sunday Times* newspaper published an article by its correspondent in Palestine; this was reprinted in the magazine *Al-Insaan*, published by the International Committee of the Red Cross. It describes the situation faced by the Palestinians in Hebron in this way:

> "When night falls on Hebron, it marks the beginning of another night of fear and trepidation for the Palestinian people in that divided city. The night passes in the hope that we will see a new dawn that will be more merciful to those people and to their children, who spend their nights weeping in terror."

Year by year, day by day, the Middle East peace process has since the Madrid conference been losing momentum and motivation. It is very clear to all who are interested in peace, within our region or outside it, that Israel's continued occupation of the Arab territories — under the pretext of a pathological need for security and on the basis of false allegations — is the main impediment to the achievement of peace.

The peace process is at a standstill on all its tracks, because Israel continues to occupy Arab territories, to reject international legitimacy, to flout resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and to refuse to implement the principle of land for peace.

We are in strong agreement with what was said in the Council last Thursday: that the fall of the previous Israeli Government was the result of what the peace process has actually achieved. This is very true, because the previous Israeli Government's policy was simply to talk about peace, not to take any concrete steps to achieve it. It claimed to be preparing to implement those internationally binding resolutions calling upon it to withdraw from the occupied Arab territories, but in fact its proposed solutions were a far cry from those resolutions, as it wants to continue its occupation and hegemony; maintain control of occupied Arab territories and Arab holy sites; and continue with its repression of Arab citizens, stripping them of their freedom, sovereignty and dignity.

The peace to which all Arabs aspire — as do all other peace-loving peoples of the world — is one that would restore to the Arabs their occupied territories through Israel's full withdrawal to the line of 4 June 1967.

The Syrian Arab Republic would like here to reiterate its unreserved support for the struggle of the heroic Palestinian people and for the realization of their inalienable rights, including the right to return, the right to self-determination, and the right to establish an independent state on their national soil, with Jerusalem as its capital.

The measures taken by Israel in the West Bank and the Gaza strip, which have led to the partitioning of the West Bank into 43 cantons and the Gaza strip into four cantons, are inhuman measures whose main objective is to restrict the mobility of Palestinian citizens and to entrench the suffocating economic blockade, with a view to subjugating the Palestinian people and to starving them. This has caused the situation in the Palestinian territories to deteriorate and has increased tensions, reflecting the real intentions of the Israeli Government.

The Arab Foreign Ministers, in a communiqué dated 12 March 2001, called upon the Security Council to assume its responsibilities and to take the necessary measures to protect the Palestinian people and to prevent any further deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. The Foreign Ministers called on the Security Council to adopt the necessary resolutions to form an international protection force for the Palestinian people and to dispatch it, as urgently as possible, to the occupied Palestinian territories.

The Syrian Arab Republic, which opened the way for the Middle East peace process, would like to reiterate once again the Council's continuing obligation to bring about a comprehensive and just peace in the region, which should be its strategic option.

I should like also to reiterate that the Council should take all the necessary measures to see that its relevant resolutions are implemented, in particular resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as any measures leading to a complete Israeli withdrawal from

the Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinian occupied territories, in order to bring about a comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East.

Israel's longstanding policy of repression and aggression shows no sign of ending. Our people, who were instrumental in building human civilization, are a freedom-loving people who support the principles of sovereignty and independence. They cannot accept injustice, insults or subjugation to Israeli terrorism. Peace requires justice, and Israel cannot bring about peace and security with its continued occupation of Arab territories. And peace, as I would emphasize once again, is the only road to security.

The President: I thank the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is Mr. Ibra Deguène Ka, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to whom the Council has extended an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure.

I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Ka (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, allow me at the outset to welcome you to New York and to congratulate you most warmly on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of March. I am confident that under your able leadership, the work of the Council will be carried out in a constructive manner.

I should like also to take advantage of this opportunity to congratulate your predecessor, Ambassador Saïd Ben Mustapha, Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations, on the exemplary manner in which he guided the work of the Council during the month of February.

I am grateful to you, Mr. President, as well as to the other members of the Council, for giving me the opportunity, in my capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to participate in this important debate on the current situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem.

The last time that the Council had a discussion on this theme was at the beginning of October 2000. Even a cursory glance at developments in recent months in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, reveals that a crisis of major proportions has developed. In my statement to the Council on 4 October last, I said that 63 Palestinians had been killed and more than 1,500 injured. Today, more than 360 Palestinian civilians have been killed and some 15,000 wounded. Tragically, the sad toll of Palestinian victims includes many children, women and elderly people. Despite the worldwide expressions of concern about the policies of the Government of Israel, the toll continues to rise. At the beginning of this month, the Committee that I represent outlined its position with respect to the dangerous security situation on the ground, the worrying standstill in the peace negotiations and the terrible deterioration of the Palestinian economy.

In the course of recent months, our Committee has noted with extreme concern the continuing cycle of violence in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, and the excessive reliance on force by the Israeli Defence Forces. According to the information available, Israel is systematically responding with disproportionate force to every outbreak of protest throughout the occupied Palestinian territory. Furthermore, groups of armed settlers regularly harass and physically assault Palestinian civilians, destroying their property and committing criminal acts for which they go unpunished. The Israeli Defence Forces, the Israeli security forces and the police often close their eyes to acts of violence and provocation by settlers, thereby causing resentment and anger to breed within the Palestinian population.

Paradoxically, on the one hand, a state of affairs has been created which is fuelled by confrontation and a cycle of violence; on the other hand, unarmed populations are being asked to end the violence that is triggered by provocation and punitive expeditions on the part of the occupier.

Our Committee has also joined the international community in condemning the practice of extra-judicial killings of Palestinian officials by the Israeli security forces. These practices are contrary to the accepted norms of international law; such behaviour creates a crisis of confidence among the parties, thereby pushing back the prospect of resuming the peace negotiations.

We welcome the position of principle taken in this regard by the European Union. The Committee

believes that the international community should not stand idly by as the situation escalates. Indeed, it should urgently consider ways of protecting the Palestinian people by taking the necessary measures, including establishing international mechanisms to protect the Palestinian civilians. We firmly believe that the current status quo is completely unacceptable and untenable and that decisive action is needed to put an end to the violence and bloodshed. Our Committee calls upon the new Government of Israel to respect and live up to the agreements that it has already signed and to respect the principles of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, as well as the provisions of relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

The upheavals that we have been witnessing since September have had a devastating effect on the Palestinian economy, and our Committee is particularly concerned about the dangers posed by the rapid disintegration of the Palestinian economy as a result of restrictive policies pursued by the Government of Israel. The continuing closures of the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, restrictions on the movement of people and goods, the withholding of customs and tax income and other measures of collective punishment have had a disastrous, cumulative effect on the Palestinian economy as a whole. It is now impossible to work or gain access to the labour market in Israel, the climate of violence is keeping tourists away, food crops have been destroyed and infrastructure has been deliberately damaged. The Palestinians are now under siege and are forced to struggle for survival on a daily basis, and can no longer plan for their long-term development.

The recent reports by the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator paint a bleak and disturbing picture of this situation, of the imminent fiscal crisis of the Palestinian Authority and its institutions, which are in danger of no longer being able to function. We fully share the view that the budgetary situation of the Palestinian Authority should be a top priority of the international community, as should assistance to the Palestinian people for dealing with an overwhelming humanitarian crisis. Our Committee welcomes the willingness of the donors to come to the aid of the Palestinians. For its part, the United Nations should continue to mobilize its resources so as to provide substantial assistance to provide for the most urgent needs.

I should now like to say a few words about the state of the peace process. All of us here are greatly concerned about the freeze in the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations. Encouraged by the noticeable progress achieved at Camp David, Sharm el-Sheikh and Taba, we had reason to believe that the parties were moving towards a real breakthrough — even, perhaps, an agreement. These hopes have not yet been fulfilled because some statements attributed to certain members of the new Israeli Government show that the Israeli side does not seem to be prepared to resume the negotiations from the point where they were left off.

The year 2001 will mark the tenth anniversary of the Middle East peace conference held in Madrid. The hopes and the progress made in the past decade cannot be allowed to wane. We should do everything in our power to help the parties to return to the negotiating table and complete the historic journey that they embarked on, with courage and foresight, in 1991, and finally achieve the peace of the brave and a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Within the framework of this historic voyage, we should never forget that the goal of the journey is, specifically, to bring an end, in peace and security and through negotiation, to the illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm the position of our Committee that the United Nations, through its various efforts and activities, should continue to assume its permanent responsibility towards all aspects of the question of Palestine until it is resolved in a satisfactory manner, in conformity with the relevant United Nations resolutions and in accordance with international legitimacy, until the Palestinian people fully enjoy their inalienable and immutable rights — so that the dramatic events taking place on the ground that have once again brought us together in this Chamber finally become a distant memory.

The President: I thank the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Fadaifard (Islamic Republic of Iran): I wish to extend my congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of March. We have full confidence that, under your wise guidance, the Council will make progress in dealing with the issues on its agenda. Let me also extend my felicitations to your predecessor, Ambassador Saïd Ben Mustapha of Tunisia, for his skilful stewardship of the Council's activities last month. I should also like to thank you for convening this important meeting of the Security Council at this critical time for the Palestinian people.

Since last September, the occupying forces in the Palestinian territories have been engaged in an excessive and disproportionate act of violence and collective punishment against the rightful protests of the Palestinians against the protracted occupation of their homeland. Over the course of recent months, the whole of the Palestinian territories have been the scene of the killing of hundreds and injuring of thousands of defenceless civilians.

Moreover, there has been an increase in tension and the level of violence in the Palestinian territories since a more aggressive Israeli faction took up the reins of power. Among other things, this has led to an intensification of the policy of suffocating and besieging cities and villages in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The tightening of blockades against the Palestinian territories by the occupiers is further preventing Palestinians from having access to basic necessities and medical treatment, travelling to work and trading their goods throughout the area. Without a doubt, this amounts to collective punishment and a stranglehold on a whole people in the name of security for the occupiers. The pursuit of this policy over several months has devastated the Palestinian economy, created financial a crisis in the Palestinian institutions and plunged more families into poverty.

Indiscriminate killings and the besieging of the Palestinians negate the Israeli pretence of peaceful intentions or a desire for pacific co-existence with the Muslims and Christians in the region. The crimes being committed by the Israeli armed forces are consistent with the aggressive and expansionist policies of the occupying Power. Israel's repeated crimes and heavy-handed approach run counter to all its high-sounding and empty claims of seeking peace. This regime is the main cause behind the tension and instability in the region. While deceitfully negotiating peace with the Palestinians, it embarked on violently assaulting the oppressed and defenceless people of the occupied territories.

The fundamental question the international community — represented by the United Nations and the Security Council — now faces is to what extent we can normally justify the loss of Palestinian blood and life, the homelessness and agony before the occupiers and aggressors are tamed and the fundamental rights of the Palestinians to self-determination in their own land is realized. The international community in general and the Islamic world in particular continue to be deeply concerned about the ongoing atrocities being committed by Israeli troops. The disdain of Israeli leaders for the principles of international law and the decisions of the United Nations is no secret to anyone in this Chamber. That disdain is commonly acknowledged, deplored and condemned. But very little, if anything, is done about it.

In this context, we deplore some recent remarks that amount to encouraging the occupying regime in the pursuit of its bloody campaign against Palestinian civilians. The recent reiteration of commitment by a Member State of the United Nations to transfer its embassy to occupied Al-Quds — which, among other things, constitutes a violation of Security Council resolutions — represents one-sided support for the Israeli regime, is likely to further escalate tension in the region and represents a clear bias towards occupation and aggression.

In our view, the international community and the United Nations — especially this Council — have a responsibility to intervene to stop the brutal campaign by the Israeli armed forces against civilians. Undoubtedly, the unchecked acts by Israel will further exacerbate the situation in the Middle East as a whole. The defeat in the Council last December of a draft resolution to authorize the establishment of a United Nations observer force to protect Palestinian civilians led to more violence and more bloodshed. Since then more than 70 Palestinians have lost their lives, more destruction has occurred, and the plight of Palestinian civilians has been further exacerbated.

In the face of this worsening situation, the Palestinian authorities and a vast majority of the Member States of the United Nations — including the Islamic, Arab and Non-Aligned States — have called for an international force to be stationed in the occupied territories with a view to protecting civilians and putting an end to the bloody campaign by the Israeli forces. We expect the Security Council to fulfil its responsibility this time and take concrete and appropriate measures to this end.

The President: I thank the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Cuba. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to congratulate Ukraine and you, Mr. President, and to wish you every success in your presidency. I also wish to recognize the efficient presidency of Tunisia.

We are discussing one of the most complicated and recurrent items on the Security Council agenda. Dozens of resolutions have been adopted that clearly establish the will of the majority of Member States to move towards a definitive and just solution of the item.

Just recently, to mention a few examples, Security Council resolution 1322 (2000) and General Assembly resolution ES-10/7 were adopted, which condemned the excessive use of force by the Israeli armed forces and called for the implementation of resolution 1322 (2000). The Human Rights Commission adopted a resolution in this regard on 19 October 2000. The Economic and Social Council adopted a resolution on Palestine, which is contained in the report of the Human Rights Commission. Furthermore, the Secretary-General has also continued his tireless efforts in the search for solutions to the present crisis.

Nonetheless, it is very frustrating to acknowledge the fact that despite all these efforts, Israeli aggression continues. The Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 continues to be trampled; the excessive and indiscriminate use of force does not stop; and every day new Palestinian victims increase the martyrology of that suffering people. Over 400 dead and several thousand injured, the large majority being innocent Palestinian civilians, clearly reflect the tragic human cost of these almost six months of violence, begun as a result of the provocative visit of 28 September to Al-Haram al-Sharif.

The border closures of the Palestinian territories and other acts with serious economic consequences are also flagrant violations of the human rights of the Palestinian population, which should be severely condemned. The Palestinian National Authority requires the urgent assistance of the international community to avoid economic collapse.

If Israel had complied with the many Security Council resolutions on the question of Palestine, the critical situation we are witnessing today in occupied territories would not be taking place now.

At the Security Council meeting held on 10 November, the President of the Palestinian National Authority described in detail the deterioration of the situation and clearly explained the reasons for which an observer mission of protection should be immediately deployed. My delegation wishes to reiterate once again the need to deploy the observer force as soon as possible.

The Israeli policies and practices that deny the legitimate needs and aspirations of the Palestinian people will never be compatible with a legitimate peace process, based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). A just and lasting peace cannot be achieved in the Middle East until the Palestinian people exercise their legitimate right to establish an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital, until all the occupied Arab territories are returned, and until Israel withdraws from the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and the Syrian Golan to the 4 June 1967 border.

There will not be a lasting peace until the provocations in southern Lebanon end, until all Arabs arbitrarily and unjustly imprisoned, detained and frequently tortured in Israeli prisons are released, and until the illegal Israeli settlements are dismantled pursuant to Security Council resolution 465 (1980).

It is striking how some Council members, so ready to promote the idea of deploying humanitarian intervention, with or without Security Council authorization, when they decide that human rights situations must be remedied, in this case work to avoid enabling the Council or the General Assembly to act in exercise of the powers conferred on them by the

Charter. Nothing could better illustrate what interests are actually served by the calls for humanitarian intervention.

We all know why a different standard is applied in the case of Israel. This is the typical case of what happens when the United States, a permanent member of the Security Council and an ally of Israel, looking after its national interests, arbitrarily uses its privileges. Hypocrisy and double standards continue to prevail, sheltered by the anachronistic and antidemocratic privilege of the veto.

As long as the United Nations does not assume the direct and irreplaceable responsibility assigned to it by the Charter and by the will of the international community, and as long as it is hegemonic and narrow domestic policy objectives that determine the course of negotiations, there will not be peace. Nor will there be peace if the Israeli Government does not change its policy of colonial occupation and its flagrant, massive and systematic violation of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, and if it refuses to continue the negotiation process and to fulfil the commitments undertaken.

Cuba commends the position held by the Security Council members who are also members of the Non-Aligned Movement, as well as of the other Council members who have been making sincere efforts to try to have this Council fulfil its duties.

Cuba calls on the Security Council to act without further delay and in accordance with the seriousness of this crisis and its serious responsibilities. This body must immediately establish an observer force to protect the civilian Palestinian population. It must urge Israel to immediately cease its use of force and to implement the many resolutions on the question of the Middle East adopted by the Security Council and the General Assembly. This is the only path to a just and lasting peace.

Mr. Ould Deddach (Mauritania) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish at the outset to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your presidency of the Council for this month. I extend my thanks to your predecessor, Mr. Saïd Ben Mustapha, the Permanent Representative of Tunisia, for his wise steering of the Council last month.

We meet today, six months after the onset of the Palestinian popular uprising, which has led to hundreds of fallen martyrs and thousands injured. The Council discussed the situation in the occupied Arab Palestinian territories in meetings last October and December and has not reached an agreement to end the violence carried out against the Palestinian people. Many other initiatives have been taken and have not led to positive results.

The suffocating blockade that affects the Palestinian citizens in the occupied territories exposes the lives of innocent women, children and the elderly to tragedy and has an adverse impact on the Palestinian economic situation. We call for this blockade to be lifted and for a halt to violent acts against the Palestinian people, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1322 (2000), adopted on 7 October 2000.

The Mauritanian people and Government express their full solidarity with the Palestinian people and strongly condemn the repressive measures taken against them without justification, contravening the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which must be applied to the occupied Palestinian territories.

The Security Council is called upon today to assume its responsibility as guarantor of international peace and security by providing the necessary international protection to the Palestinian people through sending an international military observer force to the occupied territories, under the auspices of the United Nations. The Mauritanian delegation thus supports the draft resolution submitted to the Council by the Non-Aligned Movement. We hope it will be unanimously adopted as a first step to guaranteeing protection for the Palestinian people and to opening the possibility of returning the peace process to its proper track.

Mr. President, you undoubtedly know that these serious measures represent an impediment to achieving peace in the region, which needs it so desperately. On behalf of my delegation, I would like once again to reaffirm our support for the peace process. We believe that no just, comprehensive and durable peace can be achieved in the region except through the Madrid terms of reference, the principle of land for peace, the full implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions that guarantee a full Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian territories and all Arab occupied territories, and the restoration of all of the inalienable and legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, foremost of which is its right to self-determination and

to the establishment of an independent State, with Al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital.

The President: I thank the representative of Mauritania for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Morocco, whom I invite to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Zahid (Morocco) *(spoke in French)*: First of all, Mr. President, I wish to express my congratulations to you on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month of March. I also wish to thank you for the diligence with which you have convened this meeting of the Council to examine the grave situation in the Palestinian territories as a result of the increased repression of the Palestinian population and the tightening of the blockade around the Palestinian towns. May I also congratulate your predecessor, the Ambassador of Tunisia, who guided the work of the Council with remarkable competence, and who focused the international community's attention on the grave crisis confronting our African continent.

We listened very attentively to the many statements on the alarming, tragic and exasperating situation in the Palestinian territories, and Morocco wishes to echo all of the cries of distress and all of the appeals to reason that have been made from this rostrum.

For many months now, violence has ravaged the occupied Palestinian territories because of the impasse in the peace process and the repression, of which the civilian populations of these occupied territories are the victims. Persistent efforts have also been made to hold responsible the Palestinian victims of the violence. This violence unfortunately has been the echo of yet more violence and of many other acts of provocation. The grave deterioration in the security situation of the Palestinians has compounded the deterioration of their daily economic lives because of increasingly frequent and lengthy blockades. All the media have shown us images of children who cannot go to school and mothers who do not have any access to hospital. The Palestinian people should have been, and should be, spared this type of suffering, which has gone on now for half a century. These are conditions that can only exacerbate violence.

Morocco is very concerned at this explosive situation, which threatens the peace and security of the entire region, a region that is struggling for its right to peace, security, stability and prosperity. Hundreds of Palestinians, victims of Israeli violent excesses, and hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who are victims of the closures of Palestinian territories require urgent action on the part of the international community. We must ensure the protection of these civilian populations that have suffered so much and avoid the economic collapse of the young Palestinian State.

In order to re-launch the peace process, the repression and the economic sanctions against the Palestinian population must come to an end. It is for these reasons that, once again, we call upon Israel to comply with the relevant provisions of the Geneva Convention on the protection of civilian populations and that it put an end to the repression and to the closures that can only heighten the violence and reduce even further the chances for the peace process to resume and be successful. This process already has been made very fragile by the long crisis that the region has been experiencing for too long now.

Morocco is very concerned at the grim prospects for the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, and we associate ourselves with all the peace- and justice-loving States in asking that the Security Council establish appropriate measures to allow the Palestinian people to live in peace on their own territory. We are convinced that this is the only way likely to ensure the security of Israel itself, as well as that of the peace and security of the entire region. The Palestinian people must enjoy its inalienable rights, including its right to establish its own State on its own territory, with Al-Quds as its capital.

The Security Council should, without delay, once again consider sending a protection force to the occupied territories. At any cost it must also bring the Israeli authorities back to the negotiating process on the basis of the Madrid and Oslo agreements. In order to restore peace to the Middle East, the Palestinian people must recover all of their territory occupied since 1967. They must also be able to establish their State on their territory with Al-Quds as the capital. The path to peace, just like the path to security and prosperity in the region — and this includes for Israel — necessarily means a resumption of negotiations, an end to Israeli aggression and a withdrawal from all the Palestinian and Arab occupied territories, including Al-Quds al-Sharif, as well as the exercise by the Palestinian people

of their rights, in accordance with the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

The deterioration of the situation has now reached cataclysmic proportions. As we know, violence breeds more violence. The international community today has a more and more pressing obligation vis-à-vis the Palestinian people. Together we must undertake urgent action that responds to the gravity of the situation, to avoid the inevitable, for it is we, all of us, who will bear the responsibility.

The President: I thank the representative of Morocco for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Lebanon, whom I invite to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Tadmoury (Lebanon)*(spoke in Arabic)*: Mr. President, it gives me pleasure to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. I would also like to extend our thanks to your predecessor, the Ambassador of Tunisia, for the constructive efforts he deployed during his presidency last month.

It is regrettable and sad for us to witness the suffering, repression and killing of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories due to the excessive use of force by the Israeli occupation forces since last September. We are deeply concerned at the escalation of violent acts and the besieging of the occupied territories in an attempt to bring the Palestinians to their knees and to deprive them of their basic needs for survival. Israel, as an occupying power, has taken measures that represent a violation of the Palestinian citizens' human rights, in flagrant defiance of the Fourth Geneva Convention and related Protocols. The tragic situation prevailing in the occupied territories can only deepen the feelings of desperation, hatred and violence and can only bring about more violence.

Last Thursday we listened to statements by Member States in the Security Council. It is only fair to say that they expressed a positive view of the provision of an international observer force in the Palestinian territories. This force would be established with a view to protecting the Palestinians from the excessive use of force by Israel, providing for their basic security needs and helping them in rejecting occupation and in their search to establish their own State, an idea that enjoys widespread international support.

The dispatch of an international observer force is only a small step and not a solution to the occupation of the Palestinian territories by Israel since 1967. It does not call for suspicion, hesitation and rejection. One of the positive aspects of dispatching such an observer force would be to provide reasonable conditions that would enable the parties to go back to negotiations in order to continue on their path towards peace; another would be its embodiment of the international community's willingness to find peaceful and acceptable solutions within the framework of international legitimacy.

The Security Council is called upon today, more than ever before, in the light of the new political environment in Israel, to provide assistance to the Palestinian people and to alleviate the suffering that they are unjustly facing every day. These actions would be in the Security Council's interest in the context of the maintenance of international peace and security. It would only be opportune for the Council to establish an international observer force as a first step on the road to peace.

It is worth mentioning here that the just, comprehensive and lasting solution that would secure the interests of all the warring parties in the region can be achieved only through the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and General Assembly resolution 194 (III), within the framework of the principle of land for peace and in accordance with the Madrid terms of reference, while also taking into account the important achievements that have been reached in past negotiations.

Peace and security have their own requirements. Israel, as a society and as a Government, should be prepared to accept that, beginning with the recognition of the legitimate rights of others.

The President: I thank the representative of Lebanon for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is Mr. Mokhtar Lamani, Permanent Observer of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to the United Nations, to whom the Council has extended an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Lamani (*spoke in French*): I would like to express on behalf of the Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference our concern over the human and material suffering and losses incurred by the Palestinian people following the acts of aggression directed against that people and the practices that have already cost the lives of the hundreds of Palestinians and have resulted in thousands of injured persons, as well as in the destruction of the infrastructure in the territories — a direct consequence of the policy of blockading and encircling the Palestinian territories by the occupying power, Israel.

Nevertheless, we have had good reason to believe that the Security Council, faced with the deterioration of the situation, would not remain inert and impassive, particularly since the international community has mobilized itself behind the Palestinian people. One can see tangible proof in the statements of the previous speakers in this Chamber. Even the reprehensible actions which the other party considers subversive are only a clear and evident demonstration of the root of the original problem, which so far has not been dealt with in depth, and that is the Palestinian problem.

However, these acts cannot justify the policy of sanctions and collective punishment designed to starve an entire people. It is specifically this people that is the last one not to have achieved the right to self-determination. We must bear in mind that all the cataclysms, which for more than 50 years have continued to batter the Middle East, have their epicentre in the tragedy imposed on the Palestinian people.

Peace, security and the prosperity of the region will remain unattained, with serious risks that these disturbances will spread, as long as an adequate solution, in conformity with the resolutions of this body and of the General Assembly, is not implemented, one that guarantees the right to a dignified and peaceful life for all of the peoples of the region. Harmonious cohabitation necessarily implies the right of the other to existence, through the dismantling of the settlements and the end of the occupation. That is the real condition for genuine peace: allowing the Palestinians to have sovereignty over a homogeneous and uninterrupted territory.

It is certainly not with more repression, blockading of Palestinian territory and measures of collective punishment that peace will be further consolidated. Indeed, these measures and practices can only serve to exacerbate the frustrations and increased feeling of dependence regarding the occupying power, Israel.

In this situation, the Organization of the Islamic Conference calls upon the international community to act immediately and effectively to put an end to the Israeli actions against the Palestinian people. The onerous sacrifices made by that people are likely to be nullified by the collapse of its economy and its fragile infrastructure. Given the intransigence of the Israeli Administration and its insistence on trying to place on the Palestinians the responsibility for its policy of provocation and rejection of commitments undertaken, the situation in the region is thus a very serious one. It is a real threat to peace in the region and even in the world.

In accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and its past resolutions adopted on this subject, the Security Council must try to provide for the Palestinians the necessary protection that they hope for and to lift unjust and repeated blockades. This is a preliminary step to the establishment of a climate conducive to the resumption of the peace process at the point where it left off and on the basis of principles that made it possible to begin in Madrid a decade ago, namely, the respective resolutions of the Security Council and the principles of right and of international legality.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is Mr. Ali Ahmed Abbas, Deputy Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations, to whom the Council has extended an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Abbas (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish at the outset, Sir, to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of March.

The Council is now engaged in a discussion of a long-standing, recurring issue of great seriousness; it must shoulder its responsibilities in a positive and effective manner. The situation in the occupied Palestinian territories has reached a stage at which it requires urgent, immediate and effective action by the Security Council in response to grave Israeli measures in a way that will secure international protection for the

Palestinian people and its leadership. The Council should do its utmost to prevent a further deterioration, which would lead to heightened tension throughout the region.

Despite the international belief in the justice and legitimacy of the call for the deployment of an international protection force as soon as possible, Israel's intransigence and actions compel us to recall a number of points.

First, Israel is attempting to prevent the Council from adopting a binding resolution, once again branding it as a country that lacks commitment to resolutions of international legitimacy, to international law and to the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949. That does not surprise us. There is nothing to deter Israel from such a course.

Secondly, when it is exposed for what it is, Israel tries to protect itself and to conceal its true nature with the assistance of a permanent member of the Security Council, with a view to stopping the Council from condemning it for all its oppressive measures and for its war of genocide against the Palestinian people. Israel makes these attempts because international bodies have started to expose its inhumane policies. Here it is worth mentioning the recent 14 March report (E/CN.4/2001/121) of the human rights inquiry commission established pursuant to Commission on Human Rights resolution S-5/1 of 19 October 2000, on human rights violations in the occupied territories. We urge Council members to heed the recommendation set out in paragraph 11 of chapter X, part II of that report. That recommendation reflects the magnitude of the tragedy, which is no secret to anyone.

Thirdly, Israel's attempts to pre-empt Security Council resolutions, especially resolution 1322 (2000), and the resolutions of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly are making it more difficult for the Council to adopt the urgent measures that the situation calls for. This is in addition to Israel's continuous attempts to divert attention from its colonialism at a time when the old form of colonialism has totally disappeared. Such prevarication is aimed at muddying the issues to enable Israel to present itself as a country under occupation, and not a country that occupies the land of others. That prevarication and procrastination are no secret. No one can argue that the occupation is not the essence of the crisis. Israel treats the world with utter contempt, despite its occupation, which has lasted too long and which has caused the situation to explode.

Fourthly, Israel continues deliberately to prevaricate, at a time when no one would deny its request for security. But the truth about Israel's position is now well known to the international community: it reflects only Israel's colonialist leanings. Israel is taking all these measures and making all these attempts to prevent the Council from adopting any resolution that would run counter to its own viewpoint or would block its aspirations. The sponsors of this behaviour, notably the United States of America, should shoulder their responsibility and make the necessary effort to put the peace talks back on track, rather than maintain a policy of a double standard, which was a distinguishing mark of the previous United States Administration. That would enhance the credibility of the Security Council, which is needed more than ever before.

The League of Arab States has always expressed its interest in a comprehensive, just and lasting peace for all the countries of the region, and has made that position well known in every regional and international context, notably before the Security Council. Given its Charter responsibilities, in view of the gravity of the situation and in the light of the statements made thus far in this debate, the Council should, first, take all necessary steps to enable all parties to overcome the present situation and to put an end to the tragedy suffered by the Palestinian people by adopting the draft resolution that has been before the Council since last December; this would set matters straight and would revitalize the Middle East peace process.

Secondly, the Council should unambiguously reiterate to Israel that a just peace will provide true security and that such a peace can be achieved only by implementing resolutions of international legitimacy, by the total withdrawal of Israeli forces from territories occupied since 1967 and by making possible the establishment of an independent State of Palestine with Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 181 (II), which recognized the existence of two States in Palestine within the borders of the Mandate. Any other settlement will be doomed to failure.

Thirdly, the Council should move with the utmost speed to attain the objectives of international

legitimacy, as reflected particularly in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and in General Assembly resolution 194 (III), as well as in the Madrid peace agreements.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Indonesia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Widodo (Indonesia): Let me begin by expressing my delegation's sincere congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I should like to commend His Excellency Mr. Saïd Ben Mustapha of Tunisia for his skilful leadership in conducting the work of the Council last month.

My delegation believes that the convening of this urgent meeting was both timely and appropriate in the light of the tragedy of incalculable proportions unfolding in the occupied Palestinian territories. My delegation therefore cannot but voice its profound concern and deepening dismay at a worsening situation which could have the gravest ramifications not only for the Middle East region in particular but for the world at large.

The international community is witnessing an intensification of violence resulting in hundreds of Palestinian casualties, including women and children. Such a development, together with the imposition of a siege of Palestinian territories, has caused severe restrictions on movements of goods and persons, thereby reversing the positive trends of previous years and placing the nascent economy in sharp decline. The dire consequences of the present state of affairs are clear to all: the unacceptable loss of lives and property, the perpetuation of economic misery and violations of human rights that affect the lives of an entire people and nation. Worse still, these policies of the occupying Power have heightened feelings of fear, despair and anger, while destroying all trust and confidence in the peace process. Such an untenable situation should not be allowed to continue.

This body is mandated by the Charter to maintain international peace and security. It therefore cannot stand idly by and fail to shoulder its responsibility to take urgent and necessary action at this critical juncture. On 18 December 2000, the Security Council did not adopt a draft resolution due to the lack of necessary votes. That draft resolution would have dispatched a mission comprising military and police observers to stop the deterioration on the ground. If that had been the case, a needless loss of Palestinian lives would have been averted, and the violence would have been contained.

The Council should therefore brook no further delay in implementing such actions, for no amount of convoluted logic or pretexts can justify inaction on its part. Undeniably, one human life lost is one too many. How then can the international community, in all good conscience, justify non-action — on any grounds — when scores of Palestinian people are being killed every day?

In view of the pressing circumstances, my delegation believes that the Security Council has no alternative but to intervene at the present time and to deploy a United Nations monitoring force in the occupied territories, in order to stop the killing of innocent civilians, ease tensions on the ground and bring about normalcy as soon as possible.

Furthermore, the task of restoring and fostering a climate of trust between the two sides will, hopefully, lead to the resumption of the peace process. In addition, in a time of crisis, it is important for the concerned parties to bear in mind that the momentum of the Sharm el-Sheikh memorandum and the Tabah talks should not be diminished and that the arduous efforts of the past 10 years cannot be in vain, so that future generations of the people in the region will be able to coexist in peace and harmony.

In conclusion, we hold steadfast to the view that the basic elements of a peaceful settlement remain unchanged and that a comprehensive peace can be attained only through the unfettered exercise of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including the establishment of their own independent homeland. My delegation also believes that the United Nations has a historical and moral responsibility regarding the question of Palestine, the core issue of the Middle East conflict, and should remain closely engaged in the process of bringing about a just and lasting peace.

The President: I thank the representative of Indonesia for the kind words he addressed to me.

The representative of Israel has asked to speak, and I now call on him.

Mr. Lancry (Israel) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, I should like to thank you for the opportunity to speak once again, at the end of this

meeting of the Security Council on the situation in our region.

Israel has every reason to consider that this dialogue with the Security Council was undertaken, in particular by Mr. Shimon Peres, Minister for Foreign Affairs, in a spirit of openness and as a constructive and frank exchange of views leading to greater understanding.

We have taken note of the satisfaction voiced by the members of the Council regarding this more intensive dialogue between Israel and the United Nations. Indeed, our country, after acceding to the regional Group of Western European and Other States — thereby putting an end to 40 years of exclusion — following its withdrawal from southern Lebanon, in full conformity with Security Council resolution 425 (1978), now finds itself much more in step with the United Nations.

We have also noted an increased awareness among members of the Security Council of the true nature of the intifada, in particular of its terrorist dimension, and of the need to condemn in no uncertain terms — as we felt was the case for several members of the Council — the unacceptable and murderous practice of Palestinian terrorism.

Although this condemnation of the terrorist practices of the Palestinians seems at times to be slightly muted and is certainly voiced in a carefully crafted type of rhetoric, it is still perceptible, and although in some cases it is presented in a veiled or understated manner, nevertheless it is healthy and useful for a return to the logic of peace as well as for the fundamental credibility of the Security Council.

We would hope, however, that those who support the notion of Israel's excessive use of force — without the slightest concern for a more serious and in-depth consideration of the facts — might also be able to denounce Palestinian terrorism as an incredibly sacrilegious practice and an untenable setback that undermines the very foundation of the peace process.

Several countries that are not members of the Security Council have also taken part in this debate. We were particularly sensitive to the reiterated appeals for a return to negotiation and to the rhetoric and logic of peace. Those notable appeals also were observed in several statements by Permanent Representatives of Arab countries. Here I am certainly not thinking of the dubious contribution of the Permanent Representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. Every so often, here or in the General Assembly, we are witness to Libya's outrageously inaccurate rewriting of the history of the Jewish people in both ancient and modern times. Nor will the Iraqi or Iranian statements contribute to an Israeli-Palestinian-Arab peace.

But, in all sincerity, the statement made by Algeria — despite its highly partial nature — had value, as its conclusion contained a most commendable phrase: "a just and lasting solution to the Middle East conflict". Coming from a country that itself is experiencing a latent conflict and which has been engaged in a desperate search for domestic peace, which it fully deserves and which we very much wish to see, that comment takes on emblematic significance.

Certain States Members of the United Nations, headed by Egypt, have identified the Israeli occupation as the cause of the current crisis and of the frustration of the Palestinian people.

Let us recall, first of all, that the driving force of territorial compromise lies at the heart of the Oslo accords. That principle has been put into practice since the signing of the Oslo accords, with the result that 97 per cent of the Palestinian population and 42 per cent of the Palestinian territories are under Palestinian control. Since its adoption, that principle has never been challenged by any Israeli Government, including the Government of National Unity, which has just come to power.

Having made that useful and necessary comment in the interests of dispelling any ambiguity, I now find myself obliged to take the Security Council back, as briefly as possible, over the recent history of the Israeli-Palestinian-Arab conflict.

The Israeli occupation of June 1967 did not come as a bolt from the blue. It was the result of an attempt by part of the Arab world — the immediate neighbours of Israel, with Egypt, under Nasser, at the forefront — to proceed to the prompt annihilation of Israel.

We should also recall, as Mr. Shimon Peres did a few days ago, a further revealing and significant fact: for 19 years, between 1948 — the time of its first abortive attempt to eliminate Israel — and 1967, Egypt, which today is engaged in denouncing the Israeli occupation, was itself the occupying Power in the Gaza Strip.

Similarly, between 1948 and 1967, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan held the destiny of the West Bank in its hands. During that period, it never occurred to either Jordan or Egypt to establish in those territories a Palestinian State, which could have been done at that time.

We Israelis will certainly never forget the rare and dazzling appearance of the far-sighted genius of President Anwar Al-Sadat, who, with his exceptional generosity of deed and word and through his unique vision contributed to setting our region on the road to peace and enabling it to dream of reconciliation. Following in his wake, the noble presence of His Majesty King Hussein of Jordan also strengthened the establishment of peace in our region.

The initial peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan were achievements through which Israel was able to show its historical commitment to compromise, peace and reconciliation. Egypt and Jordan certainly remain essential driving forces for the expansion of peace in our region.

However, an inevitable question arises. I must raise this question even though it concerns the statement made by an ambassador whom I consider to be a personal friend — one who, furthermore, addressed me directly at the end of his statement. I am sure that the Council understands that I am referring to the Permanent Representative of Egypt, Ambassador Ahmed Aboulgheit.

I asked myself what could be the reason for the deliberately virulent nature of his statement — a speech whose accusatory tone was firmly in line with the anti-Israeli attitude that is favoured by certain Egyptian journalists from the institutionalized or private press. I believe that I would not be exaggerating if I were to say that Ambassador Ahmed Aboulgheit's statement is completely interchangeable with the relentlessly racist anti-Israeli columns that the Egyptian press continues to dispense with careless frenzy on a daily basis.

Furthermore, in considering Ambassador Aboulgheit's lengthy discourse — his insidious insinuations about the superiority of Israeli blood over that of the Palestinians — I believe that his statement, which at the very least was inappropriate, represents some of the worst demagoguery ever heard in the Council.

But above and beyond the polemics between the representatives of two countries linked by a peace agreement, we must also wonder about some of the underlying motives of Egyptian society regarding Israeli-Palestinian relationships. The idea is to understand the reasons, whether manifest or latent, that are leading a considerable part of the intelligentsia and opinion-makers in Egypt to advocate a rejection of Israel, to the point of sometimes appearing more Palestinian than the Palestinians themselves.

It is not difficult to see that that intelligentsia, through a painful and growing awareness, is struggling with an enormous guilt complex — one that is rooted in the perception of the flagrant historical responsibility of its country, Egypt, for the disasters that were visited on the Palestinians in 1948 and 1967. It is precisely here that we find the essence of the problem of the relationship with Israel for an intelligentsia that is all too ready to demonize the Israeli people in order to satisfy its urgent need to give expression to these feelings and to alleviate, even to a small degree, its enormous burden of guilt.

All of this would be of secondary importance if it were not for the adverse influence that such attitudes and speeches can have on the development of peace between Israel and a large part of the Arab world.

In his statement, the Permanent Representative of Tunisia, Ambassador Said Ben Mustapha, asked "What does Israel expect?" (*S/PV.4295, p. 12*) given that the Palestinian request amounts to 22 per cent of the territories.

My answer is very simple: Israel expects to be able to survive after the final Israeli-Palestinian agreement. Israel expects its territory, as delimited within secure and recognized borders in the aftermath of the final agreement, not to be the object of a demographic reworking, as stipulated by the Palestinians with regard to the right of return of refugees.

Everyone understands that the right of return of the Palestinian refugees, if it were to be carried out in accordance with Yasser Arafat's ideas — that is, the potential establishment of 4 million Palestinian refugees in Israeli territory, which goes far beyond the establishment of a Palestinian State that would result from a final agreement — would effectively amount to the programmed death of Israel as a State. Israel does

not, therefore, expect to die for the sake of an agreement accompanied by demographic inundation. It is such denial — which, for the sake of convenience, I will refer to as "demographic denial" — compounded by spiritual denial and denial of the very identity of the holy Jewish sites in Jerusalem, that characterizes the Palestinian position.

Furthermore, that double denial is the underlying reason for Yasser Arafat's refusal to sign a final agreement with the Barak Government. That double denial, as we know all too well, is the true reason for the Palestinian uprising fuelled by violence and terrorism.

To be sure, the word "occupation" as applied to the territories of 1967 seems, a priori, to be the easiest explanation for Palestinian frustration. But we also need to ensure that Israel's right to exist is also fixed in the Palestinian consciousness in particular and, more generally, in that of several countries — Arab or Muslim — such as Libya, Iran and Iraq, which continue to preach daily the eradication of the State of Israel.

That lengthy digression was required not only as a response to questions and to the comments of some of my colleagues with regard to the roots of the present Israeli-Palestinian crisis, but also as a means of shedding necessary light on the issue and recalling a reality that is far more complex than the simplistic dichotomy of occupier and occupied.

As we have repeatedly said, Israel is resolute in its quest to see peace and security extended to our entire region. With a view to doing so, we would like to resume dialogue and negotiation with our Palestinian partners. In order to resume that dialogue there is a crucial need to break the cycle of violence and to rebuild confidence. It is up to the Palestinians and the Israelis, linked by their agreements and their mutual recognition, to decide to do this as soon as possible. Any diversionary tactics, such as calling for an international protection force, will only serve to hamper a return to a bilateral process.

It goes without saying that sending an international protection force while the intifada and terrorism are raging — and against the wishes of one of the parties, namely, Israel — is tantamount to sanctioning the Palestinian strategic choice of trying to achieve political objectives through terrorism. Such an endorsement by the Security Council would strip the Oslo accords of their substance and remove one of the main pillars on which they are built.

This is the reason why Israel is firmly opposed to a resolution sending an international protection force, and why it hopes to convince the Security Council of its own logic regarding the establishment of an international mission. That logic would more likely lead to the endorsement of a peace agreement — whether an interim one, as was the case with Hebron, or a final one, as was the case with Egypt — in order to ensure its proper implementation, than to a premature intervention in a situation in which violence and terrorism are improperly seeking the cover of international legitimacy.

The President: The Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations has asked for the floor.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am in fact not really certain of the nature of the statement we have just heard. Is it an attempt to exercise the right of reply or is it the second statement by Israel during the same meeting of the Security Council? The more important question is perhaps about its content, which, to say the least, is a reflection of the usual Israeli arrogance and intransigence. In fact, we had thought that the Israeli Ambassador would have made a different speech, but it seems that we are all supposed to be committed to the official statement he made earlier.

I would like to refer once again to the meeting that took place between Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and the Security Council and to the results of that meeting. Various press agencies have today quoted Mr. Peres as follows:

(*spoke in English*)

> "'Negotiations with the Palestinians will not be resumed as long as the Palestinians continue calling on the United Nations to station observers in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip', Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said on Monday."

(*spoke in Arabic*)

I do not really know whether that constitutes a threat to us or a threat to the members of the Security Council. Why are the Israelis rejecting negotiations? One of the parties is merely resorting to the Council, in accordance with international law and without having violated any of the agreements signed between the two

parties, for the purpose of restoring the situation to what it was so as to bring about peace. Israeli logic here is quite different from Israeli logic as we know it.

I would now like to refer to the content of the statement made by the representative of Israel and to the expressions he used, specifically his reference to the "terrorist" aspect of the intifada and so on.

This of course represents a serious and dangerous return to the lexicon that prevailed before the advent of the peace process. We, on the other hand, are speaking in an objective manner about the serious violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention being committed by the occupying Power, as well as about the war crimes that have been perpetrated by that Power. If the Israeli side insists, then we too are prepared to use the same expressions that were in use before the peace process began.

Another point I wish to make has to do with the fact that the Israeli Ambassador indicated that 97 per cent of the Palestinian people and 42 per cent of Palestinian territory are under Palestinian control. These figures lie, of course, given the fact that occupied Jerusalem itself has over 200,000 Palestinians. We also know that over half of the land under the control of the Palestinian Authority remains under the security control of Israeli forces. What is important to note here is that the Israelis believe that it is acceptable for Palestinians to live in isolated cantons, and that it is even a good thing. This in fact is a reflection of racist thinking that is no different from racial discrimination under apartheid and the establishment of bantustans in South Africa.

Perhaps it would have been possible to make such claims about the Palestinian people actually being under the control of the Palestinian Authority in many forums prior to the beginning of the actions that started six months ago — that is, before the imposition of siege, blockades, strangulation and all the other types of suffering we have experienced. It would be extremely ludicrous and unacceptable to talk about such issues as Israel no longer being an occupying Power due to the supposed fact that the Palestinian people are under the control of the Palestinian Authority.

We would have liked to hear something more serious and quite different. In fact, the main issue is the occupation. The essence of the tragedy is that the Israeli side does not want to understand that, and that is the reason we find ourselves in this position. I hope this situation will not deteriorate because of such persistence and insistence.

The Israeli Ambassador did not like the reference made by another colleague to the importance of not distinguishing between Israeli blood and Palestinian blood. What is the problem here? What is the problem concerning not distinguishing between the blood of both sides? The problem is that the positions taken by Israel and Israeli officials affirm our suspicions that they believe that Israeli blood is more precious and more valuable than Palestinian blood. How, when there are 10 times as many Palestinian victims, can we talk about Palestinians as the real cause of the present tragedy? What is worse is that the Israeli Ambassador made many accusations against Palestinians in his first statement. These accusations can only mean that the Palestinians are very strange and abnormal creatures. They are not human beings because they are happy when they are repressed; they seek repression, and they are very happy when their children are killed. What do these accusations mean? How can we accuse an entire unarmed people of practising force and violence against the most powerful military force in the Middle East? What does this mean?

The Israeli Ambassador has also talked about something another colleague had mentioned, concerning the essence of the Israeli position rejecting the Palestinian position on the return of refugees. This is not the situation in Palestine. Of course, we say that it is important to preserve the rights of Palestinian refugees. We emphasize that Israel should accept in principle its obligations and responsibilities vis-à-vis the Palestinian refugees and their right to return and that compensation should be given to those refugees who do not wish to return, in accordance with international law.

But this is only half of the truth. We have also said that we are prepared to negotiate with the Israeli side on certain mechanisms that would take into consideration all Israeli fears, including Israel's security requirements. Even if the Israeli side does not accept this, it should not depict our position as a request for Israel to commit suicide. Therefore, there is a conceptual problem here.

The Ambassador said that President Arafat has refused to sign an agreement with Mr. Barak despite the many concessions made by Mr. Barak. This is not

true. We talked about this in our earlier statement and we will not repeat what we have already said. But what is important now is what Mr. Sharon, the present Prime Minister, is actually saying about the peace process.

Will Israel accept the resumption of negotiations, or will it try to avoid this, giving various pretexts and excuses, pretexts that it has created and for which it is responsible? Will Israel accept the resumption of negotiations at the point at which they were suspended? Will Israel take into account the progress that has been made? Even more importantly, will Israel accept responsibility for the agreements already concluded and thus negotiate the final status?

Or would Israel like to destroy all this and impose a new transitional process on the Palestinian people? This is what the Israeli Prime Minister is actually saying in public: he would like to put aside all agreements concluded until now. The Israeli Ambassador then comes here to lecture us about Israel's peaceful position.

Until now, we have not understood the reason for Israel's rejection of the establishment of an observer force under the auspices of the United Nations. What is the real reason for that? The Israelis used to talk about the internationalization of the problem and the fact that Israel rejects the internationalization of the problem. Perhaps they have concluded that this is not really acceptable. They have talked about the fact that video cameras and the mass media are more dangerous than acts of violence. They have not given us a reason for this. The accusations they are making against the Palestinians are false, and the mass media will come to reveal the acts of violence carried out by Israel against the Palestinians.

He posed the question, if the Palestinian side "renounces" violent acts when military observers are invited, is it really rejecting violence? Our answer is that we believe that the presence of the observers would contribute positively to controlling all forms and acts of violence. It would also contribute to restoring the situation to what it was before 28 September, until we reach an agreement on the final status.

What is the problem here? The problem here is that the international community has hesitated before Israeli intransigence, the reason being that the most powerful member of the Security Council continues to support Israel. Israel is not forced to deal seriously with the Security Council because of the Council's continuous hesitation before Israel. Who could do this? How can a Minister for Foreign Affairs, after a Security Council meeting, threaten the Palestinian side by saying, "If you go to the Security Council, we will not resume negotiations." Why is this?

We extend our thanks, of course, to all the countries that have participated in the discussion during these two days. In fact, the majority of these countries have spoken very positively. Once again, we thank them all for their positions.

There are a few speakers who have used logic with which we have a problem. Such logic contributes to the present Israeli position.

Our problem is in establishing a dialogue with those few States, thus reaching a so-called artificial balance. We have a legal, political and moral problem vis-à-vis this so-called artificial balance. In fact, we do not accept any comparison between the power of the occupation force and the power of the people subjugated by this occupation. There is no comparison. In truth, we are very worried about the hesitation of those few countries in the face of the escalation of Israeli repression against the Palestinian people. The problem is that those few countries believe, whenever Israel eases the blockade and siege that have been imposed, that this is a positive thing. Why? How can we deem positive the easing of the blockade instead of calling for a halt to such a blockade? This is an invitation to Israel to intensify the blockade imposed on the Palestinians whenever it faces a problem. That is why they are behaving this way. Whenever Israel faces any form of criticism it escalates its aggressive measures; then it returns to the previous situation; then we, the representatives of the international community, applaud Israel for such behaviour. Is this logical or reasonable?

We are calling upon you, Mr. President, and the Council, to commit yourselves to upholding the minimum of international law, international humanitarian law and the provisions of the Security Council resolutions. This is all we are asking for — nothing more. Do not support any position that does not serve the peace process. Do not support any position that calls upon you to go beyond international law. It is our right to call upon the Security Council to take up its responsibilities in accordance with the provisions of international law and of its own resolutions, and even in accordance with the peace

agreements signed between the Palestinians and the Israelis, as well as the Charter, and to take the necessary measures to provide minimum protection for the Palestinian people and to halt this tragedy that is occurring in Palestine. Mr. President, this is what we want you to do.

We will try to approach this with an open mind and an open heart, and we hope that it will come about in order to send the correct message to the two parties so that the Security Council can finally contribute to changing this rapidly deteriorating situation.

The President: There are no further speakers on my list for this meeting. The next meeting of the Security Council to continue the consideration of the item on the agenda will be fixed in consultation with the members of the Council.

The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.